Revista CENTRA de Ciencias Sociales

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences

SUMMARY

Revista **CENTRA** de Ciencias Sociales

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences

Revista **CENTRA** de Ciencias Sociales
CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences

Summary

Information on CENTRA's scientific publications in social sciences

The **Andalusian Studies Center Public Foundation** –CENTRA–, attached to the Consejería de la Presidencia, Interior, Diálogo Social y Simplificación Administrativa of the Junta de Andalucía, is a scientific and cultural institution that already has a history of more than twenty years, and which has as its foundational objectives the promotion of scientific research and the generation of knowledge about the social, economic and cultural reality of Andalusia.

In accordance with these purposes and its nature, **CENTRA** has created ex novo in 2021 a line of scientific publications in the field of social sciences, in accordance with the universalist canons of scientific communication, made up of three book collections (Actualidad, Biblioteca de Investigación y Enfoques) and the CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences.

The **ACTUALIDAD** collection addresses issues of relevance and interest in the contemporary Andalusian social and political reality linked to the broader context of Spanish society, the European Union and, in short, global dynamics. It is characterized by a determined orientation to present empirical evidence of the phenomena considered, linking the data provided to its theoretical and explanatory analysis.

Even though it is a collection linked to the scientific community and research in the social sciences, it is also conceived under the broadest idea of dissemination for an audience that is not an expert in the topics covered. The collection, which has been published without interruption since 2005, is now structured according to a selection process for original manuscripts in accordance with universalist criteria of scientific quality and anonymous evaluation by academic peers external to CENTRA. It is available in digital format and is accessible by free download from the website of the Center for Andalusian Studies.

The newly created **BIBLIOTECA DE INVESTIGACIÓN** collection is made up of monographic research papers from different areas of knowledge in the social sciences. It therefore has the objective of publishing the results of exhaustive investigations in accordance with the standardized criteria of communication. In this way, this collection also allows those doctoral theses in the field of social sciences that meet these criteria to be published in it and that they are presented in a format compatible with editorial standards and the established length.

The **ENFOQUES** collection, also created ex novo, is aimed at bringing together under the same volume the academic results of seminars, scientific conferences, etc., that are the consequence of some academic initiative for research or debate whose result implies a collective work directed by an editor. or editors. This group nature does not imply any reduction in the commitment to the quality and scientific nature of the collection, since the generation and validation of scientific knowledge is a joint and community process that, as the frontiers of the social sciences have advanced, is becoming more and more necessary. However, this collective nature of the works published here does require scrupulous work by the editor or editors who coordinate the initiative, supervise the work of the different contributions, evaluate their substantive results, and integrate them into the unitary whole that the publication implies. final published manuscript.

Finally, and likewise newly created, the CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences is a semi-annual scientific publication for all areas of this field of scientific knowledge that is published in Spanish and English in electronic format, freely accessible and downloadable, and in Spanish in paper support. The journal has a miscellaneous nature for the social sciences as a whole that does not exclude the possibility of publishing debate sections and specific numbers of a monographic nature that, in any case, will be governed by the same canons of universalism and anonymous evaluation of scientific communication. than the rest of the texts presented. The journal is open to unpublished texts, written with the utmost scientific rigor, coming from the broad scientific community, both nationally and internationally.

In order to provide content to all this new initiative of scientific publications, and scrupulously guarantee the principles of scientific communication, there is an interdisciplinary Editorial Board made up of prestigious professors from universities and national and international research organizations.

ARTICLES
ARTÍCULOS

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

Concentration and News Deserts: the Andalusian Information Map

Concentración y desiertos de noticias: el mapa informativo andaluz

Francisco J. Caro González
University of Seville, Spain
fjcaro@us.es

Mar García-Gordillo
University of Seville, Spain
marggordillo@us.es

Ofa Bezunartea Valencia
University of Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain
ofa@bezunartea.net

ABSTRACT

Local journalism fulfils an essential role in the expression of a region: it expresses the information closest and most useful to the reader, and also provides an extremely relevant public service function. The appearance of new digital tools has led to the growth of local or hyper-local media (digital press) in locations previously unthinkable for a physical newspaper. The "Journalistic information and well-being: analysis of the social function of the Andalusian journalistic company (US 1380696)" project carried out an in-depth study into this situation, detecting the existence of 252 local digital media outlets in the autonomous community, which is an indicator of the health of the sector in Andalusia. One of the results of this research has been the creation of an interactive map providing the exact location of each of the media outlets, as well as areas where there are greater concentrations and information deserts. Knowledge of this situation allows us to draw interesting conclusions and also make proposals for the promotion of tools of this type in those places where they do not exist.

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.93

RESUMEN

El periodismo local cumple una función fundamental para la articulación de los territorios, es la información más próxima al lector y de mayor utilidad y además tiene una función de servicio público muy relevante. La llegada de las nuevas herramientas digitales ha favorecido el crecimiento de medios de comunicación locales o hiperlocales (prensa digital) en ubicaciones impensables para un periódico en papel. El Proyecto «La información periodística y el bienestar: análisis de la función social de la empresa periodística andaluza (US 1380696)» ha realizado una investigación profunda sobre esta realidad detectando la existencia de 252 medios locales digitales en la comunidad autónoma, lo que en primera instancia denota la salud del sector en Andalucía. Uno de los resultados de esta investigación ha sido la elaboración de un mapa interactivo con el emplazamiento de cada uno de estos medios, esta herramienta da la ubicación exacta de los medios, también dónde se producen mayores concentraciones y los desiertos informativos. El conocimiento de esta realidad permite obtener conclusiones interesantes y también realizar propuestas para el fomento de herramientas de este tipo en aquellos lugares en los que no existen.

PALABRAS CLAVE: información de proximidad; periodismo local; empresa informativa; desiertos informativos; desiertos de noticias.

1. Introduction and background

1.1. The social function of local media

Academically, the local press and community journalism have always played a fundamental role in the creation of formed and informed societies, which entails the emergence of local and regional public opinion with a view on the essential issues affecting their daily lives (Camponez, 2002; Napoli *et al.*, 2019). This presence of media rooted in the territory, and whose scope of dissemination is limited, is doubly essential. On the one hand, society, the general public, needs knowledge of those issues that affect them in their everyday lives, what is happening in the places where they live and work, in order to make rational decisions. On the other hand, local governments, the managers of public affairs, need communication channels though which they can reach the citizens they govern. Thus, if the local media stands out in any specific aspect, in addition to its proximity, it is due to the high degree of accountability regarding the function of surveillance of power (Izquierdo-Labella, 2010).

Local media has demonstrated its ability to convey democratic processes on a local scale and, in addition, it is an articulator of communities, contributing to the development of a sense of belonging among the individuals within the group (Nielsen, 2015). Not only does local media set the agenda at the local level, but it can also bring national and international political issues into the local realm, reinterpreting them from the point of view and interests of citizens. It does this from a localised perspective that understands global problems from the vantage point of their impact on local and regional communities (Hess and Waller, 2017; Rivas-de-Roca, García-Gordillo and Caro-Gonzalez, 2020).

Local media has proven not only to play an essential role in defining the information agenda and therefore the issues that determine it, but it also stands out because in doing so it meets the needs of citizens (Weber and Mathews, 2022), thereby promoting the identity cohesion of geographical profiles linked to institutional demarcations, bringing cohesion to political activism, delimiting the agenda regarding important political, economic and cultural issues. The pages of local media publications, through advertisements, also mirror the commercial activity that adds character to the community. "The newspaper is an anchor: every day it reminds a community of its collective identity and the lessons of its history," says Ron Heitz, a professor at Harvard University (Abernathy, 2018). Studies by the American think tank Pew Research Center (Miller, 2018) highlight that it is regular newspaper readers who show the strongest links with their community.

> Can the media help create a more democratic society? Of course, the media can contribute to a more democratic society. The job of the press is to help produce a more informed electorate. A more informed citizenry can create a better and fuller democracy (Schudson, 1995).

Schudson's reflection, which synthesises the most transcendent role of the press, is particularly applicable in local terms, where proximity between administrators and the managed is close and where politics moves away from ideological abstractions, instead descending and focusing on the tangible and local.

Among the abundant signs of concern about the regression of local journalism, the content of *The Expanding News Desert* stands out, as does the work carried out by Penelope M. Abernathy (2018), professor at the Knight Foundation, on the loss of local news and readers and its significance for communities. It is based on the fact that newspapers act as watchdogs that hold civic institutions accountable and provide a check on the government that no constitution has been able to provide. The loss of local information results in less informed citizens who vote less and have fewer criteria. Proof of this was the 2016 US presidential elections. In rural areas without newspapers, Trump won 62% of the vote, compared to 46% of the country's overall result. One of the most respected testimonies before the Knight Commission on *Trust*, *Media* and *Democracy* stated that democracy is hindered when a large percentage of the population is not literate. Being literate is more than just understanding the meaning of words; it is having the ability to analyse arguments and facts.

In an interesting work on the changes in local media in Britain, and the possible repercussions on local democracies, Julie Firmstone (2016) states that the role of local news in the public sphere is particularly significant as it is considered vital for the proper functioning of local communities and citizen participation. It is understood that local media must perform four regulatory functions: 1) inform and educate citizens on local issues; 2) be a representative voice of those citizens; 3) hold government organisations and institutions accountable; and 4) become drivers of proactive campaigns on matters of public interest. Some concern is expressed regarding the devaluation of these functions. The British government

itself shared this sentiment when it voiced concerns about the deterioration of journalism in general and, more specifically, local journalism, to the point that it promoted a White Paper, which also focused on the aspect of plurality (Barnett, 2009). If the media fulfils an unquestionable social function, local media's public service function is even more delimited and focused; it is part of its DNA (Jenkins and Nielsen, 2020).

1.2. The current state of local media

Local press is experiencing even greater problems than the print media in general. The current crisis provides dramatic data: newspapers have lost between 40 and 50% of the readership; advertising has fallen between 60 and 70%; the staff of newsrooms has been reduced by the same proportion, with even more worrying qualitative data, as the cuts have meant the departure of the most veteran and experienced (Newman *et al.*, 2024). According to Miller (2018), in the United States, surely the country that has most appreciated the contribution of the press in public life, from 2008 to 2017 60% of press jobs disappeared; one in five local newspapers was lost and many of them retain the title, although they are "ghosts"-like.

The economic factor has been a major driver in this loss of titles, but not the only one. Social behaviour and uses have also changed in recent decades, at the same time as the economy and lifestyles have been transformed. These changes have swept away the media, which continue to be a mirror of society. Changes that in theory did not have to have a negative impact on the media ended up affecting them, such as urbanisation and the exodus from the countryside to the city. The intensification of mobility meant that thousands of people were displaced and uprooted from their places of origin, and so too were the references that linked them, among other things, to the newspaper of their city and territory. Leo Bogart (1985) saw the change of urban life in the 1960s as the first blow to the local media.

Another important blow, during the same period, was produced by television, partly due to its informative content, but above all because of its blanket coverage of leisure time like no other medium. As a source of entertainment, television has for decades been a major competitor of newspapers. The arrival of the 21st century has also brought the Internet, which can be used for all manner of content, including news, and the avalanche of screens in recent years represents the biggest offensive against traditional media, because all functions assigned to the latter, including informing, training and entertaining, have been impacted. However, for a range of reasons, neither one nor the other replaces newspapers, and their model continues to be a necessity in the public realm.

All this has led, as Miller (2018) points out, to a greater need for quality, objective and fact-based news. The local press crisis poses a great risk to civic engagement, government accountability and democracy. Along the same lines, Julia Cage (2015) reported that "information is everywhere, but the media has never been so weak".

In Britain, four large groups hold the titles comprising 72% of regional press: "A tragedy for our democracy, now moribund at the local level and in need of vigorous watchmen," denounces Steven Barnett (Cage, 2015), senior advisor to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee.

A local newspaper is much more than a means of communication, a pure container of news, a transmitter of current events. Although historically it has been assigned roles that differentiate it from a national newspaper, there is no academic literature that has delved into that difference. The vocation of the national newspaper is based on social class and political action; it represents the unity of the country to which it provides a common fund of information. However, the strength of local press lies in its ability to condense the feelings of the community, in linking and outlining a geographical area that gathers and inspires its people and distinguishes them from their neighbours (Bogart, 1985).

The exposure of the local newspaper as a unitary entity and not disintegrated or dispersed as manifested in the digital models (Cebrián, 2020) is justified by the critical situation and certain risk of disappearance that it is facing. The data on the economic, financial, professional and labour situation, and on the readership indices of Spanish local and regional newspapers, show in all their crudeness the need for a voice to sound the alarm and call for a search for possible solutions to the risk of disappearance.

1.3. Informational desertification

Despite the importance of journalism in the development of local communities (Anderson, 2013), the local news sector is experiencing a profound crisis (Nygren, 2019). The progressive disappearance of local media puts the coverage of issues at risk, and this creates real news deserts (Abernathy, 2020; Claussen, 2020). This absence of journalistic organisations in the vicinity has a notable impact on the civic engagement of the population, as evidenced by some early studies on the reduction of electoral participation in territories without local media (Magasic and Hess, 2021; Ramos, Torre and Jerónimo, 2023).

A review of the academic literature has described the crisis of local journalism in depth (Morais, Jerónimo and Correia, 2020), as well as the genesis of new hyper-local media thanks to digital technologies (López-García, Negreira-Rey and Rodríguez-Vázquez, 2016), but there are still no studies exploring how these media engage with their communities.

The concern in academia about information deserts is relatively new, although numerous studies can already be found in this regard (Ferrier, Sinha and Outrich, 2016; Ragnhild, Olsen and Birgit, 2023; Lenka, 2023; Ramos, Torre and Jerónimo, 2023; Usher, 2023; Lee and Butler, 2018) that analyse the phenomenon and study specific cases, as well as repercussions on the health of the local public sphere.

The Media Deserts Project (Ferrier, Sinha and Outrich, 2016) has enabled re-searchers to monitor the health of media ecosystems in the United States and provides a valuable tool in the use of policies and resources. This project builds on a geographic framework and uses geographic information systems technolo-gy to assess and track changes in the information health of communities across the United States. The team behind the project worked to create new mapping tools for researchers, policy-makers and local leaders to help them identify communities that lack access to local news and information, as well as to meas-ure trends in access to critical news and information and where resources can be found to establish or restore news and information coverage. Usher (2023), crit-ical of the concept, pointed out years later that, although information deserts are rhetorically powerful, the concept is very problematic due to its normative presumptions and descriptive vagueness. Concern over the loss of local journal-ism in the United States has come to the fore. There is a false nostalgia for the role of local newspapers in communities, and the focus should be on re-imagin-ing what local news might be; that the availability of local news and information may play a minor role in overall political knowledge, social identity and cultural cohesion in a hybrid and deeply polarised democracy.

In their research, Ragnhild, Olsen and Birgit (2023), focusing primarily on the closure of local media in Norway, a country characterised by a rich infrastruc-ture in this regard, address how news deserts cause democratic deficits. Based on qualitative interviews with editors and journalism students, this article ex-plores the lack of local journalists trained at small local newspapers and exposes how economic, geographical and professional prestige factors contribute to job deficits. The research presents data on recruitment shortfalls in local journal-ism, which has received little attention in the academic literature. On the oth-er hand, both editors and students highlighted how low wages, time pressure and unsatisfactory working conditions negatively impact the attractiveness of working in local journalism.

Another study, this time on the Czech Republic (Lenka, 2023), analyses the emergence of information deserts from the perspective of independent local newspapers (since there is a de-localised public publishing chain), particularly regarding structural changes that lead to a decrease in the number of media outlets providing local news in the country. The research, focusing on the jour-nalists' perspective, led to the identification of several structural changes both in local newspapers and in the publishing industry in general. Local news is still published in newspapers, which rely on the traditional business model and are slow in their digital transition. Their survival is based on (non-)co-operation with ancillary organisations (print shops, distribution companies and points of sale) and other local newspapers. Newspapers are cornered by the demands of external actors; their economic stability depends on the self-sufficiency of their production.

On the other hand, Ramos, Torre and Jerónimo (2023) studied the phenomenon of information deserts in Brazil and Portugal and related them to the democratic health of the Portuguese-speaking world, where news deserts have emerged, sparking interest in mapping the phenomenon. The researchers note that territories without news could see an increase in social problems such as misinformation, populism and democratic crises, particularly due to electoral abstention. In order to analyse the relationship between news deserts and democracy, the authors focused on how news deserts correlate with abstention rates in Brazil and Portugal. Among the results of the research, although it was not possible to establish a correlation between abstention rates and the existence of news deserts, other variables that may be affecting voters' abstention behaviour were identified.

In Spain, the work carried out by Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero and López-García (2023) is noteworthy. Based on a map of 2,874 active digital media outlets (Negredo, Bruna and Martínez-Costa, 2021), they identified information deserts in the the country by relating the population density of the municipalities and the municipal population data of 2021 with the tax domicile of the digital media companies and the coverage given on their websites. These authors warn of the risks of the advance of these barren news municipalities, since there are 11 million inhabitants who do not have access to local media and conclude that it is "necessary to study what happens in specific areas and communities, to understand in greater depth their media, the quality and frequency of the news, the sources of information used by citizens, as well as the possible risk factors" (Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero and López-García, 2023, p. 301).

Certainly, the concept of information desert is still in its genesis, and although tremendously graphic (Lee and Butler, 2019), there is still a long way to go towards establishing parameters to identify media desertification, based on economic, population or geographical indicators.

Our research has collected data from Andalusia, based on the premise that within a single territory there are social and economic gaps that affect the consumption of news (Napoli *et al.*, 2019). Andalusia is the most populous region in Spain, with more than 8 million inhabitants distributed throughout urban and rural areas, hence the interest in defining a journalistic measure of social commitment.

This research aims to identify information deserts in Andalusia. This will be based on the Andalusian digital local media map, the outcome of the research project "Journalistic information and well-being: analysis of the social function of the Andalusian journalistic company (US 1380696)", which has carried out in-depth research on the digital local media universe in the autonomous community.

2. Sample study and methodology

First, a database was developed containing a list of local Andalusian digital media companies. Information organisations with their own identity that offer a differentiated information service on the internet were selected, whose headquarters or registered office are located within Andalusia. Due to the type of research being carried out (requiring a textual analysis of the news), entities that appeared codified in the databases, such as television or radio outlets, were discarded. To do this, several data sources were cross-referenced and the media found was screened by the ten members of the research team, who verified that the companies were active and that they were media outlets with their own identity (December 2022). The databases used were: Todalaprensa.com, Agenda de la Comunicación de Andalucía (Regional Government of Andalusia), ROMDA (Registro Oficial de Medios Digitales de Andalucía, "Official Register of Digital Media Outlets in Andalusia") and Iberifier (Salaverría *et al.*, 2022). From the initial 272 media outlets, the sample was reduced to 213.

Those selected were placed on a map of Andalusia, with each outlet being linked to the main geographical area whose information interests it dealt with.

The media outlets were subjected to a content analysis, carried out between 22nd and 28th February 2023, which included variables that combined to create a social commitment indicator for the outlet (SCI). This process is described in detail in Caro-González *et al.* (2024) and the results and variables can be consulted at PERYBI-AN, https://grupo.us.es/comandsoc/explore-map.

Subsequently, the Multiterritorial Information System of Andalusia (SIMA) was used, from which the following variables were extracted from the eight provinces of Andalusia in order to interpret the information from the perspective of the news deserts described in the theoretical framework:

- Population (2021).
- Number of settlements that make up the municipality.
- Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants.
- Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants.

A descriptive and linear regression analysis was carried out for the population variables of the municipalities and the number of companies.

3. Results

The eight Andalusian provinces were analysed taking into account a set of variables that could help identify the news desert: number and size of municipalities in the province, the number of media outlets per municipality and the location of those outlets. First, a regression analysis of the different variables considered was carried out. The only statistically significant relationship ($R2=0.5508$) was between the size of municipalities and the existence of media outlets (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Linear regression between the population of the municipalities variable and the number of media outlets

y = 2E-05x + 1,5023
R² = 0,5508
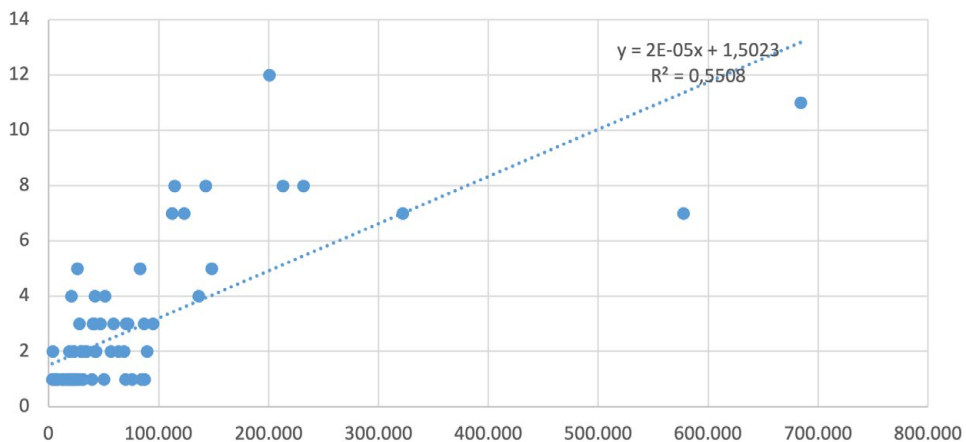
Source: own research.

There is, however, no relationship between the number of settlements in a municipality and the existence of media companies. Nor have we found a statistically significant relationship between the number of media outlets per municipality and the SCI.

Figure 1 shows in isolation the cases of Almería (with 12 media outlets located in the provincial capital) and Seville, which has triple the population yet only 11 outlets. This situation will be discussed in the detailed analysis of each province provided below.

3.1. Almería

Table 1

Data from the province of Almería on the number of media companies (SIMA and database, 2022)

	Almería	Average per province	Difference
Population	731,792	1,059,051	-
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	8.6	12.5	-
Municipalities	102	97.1	+
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	6	10.4	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	5.9	12.8	-
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	13	19.1	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	13	22	-
Media companies	13	26.6	-
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	6.1	12.5	-
Municipalities with media outlet	2	10	-
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	2	13	-
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.01776461	0.02514044	-
Average SCI	3.84	4.12	-

Source: own research.

In Almería there is a significant concentration of media outlets in the provincial capital (11), with there only being one outside the capital, in El Ejido, which has a population of 84,500 inhabitants and is rich in economic resources due to its significant agricultural activity. The percentage of municipalities in Almería with over 20,000 inhabitants is the second lowest in Andalusia at just 6%. What's more, there are four towns that exceed the threshold of 20,000 inhabitants that don't have their own media outlet, and only 2% of municipalities do have one. This figure shows that local journalism coverage in the province is scarce, and here we can suggest that there is a news desert.

The number of media companies is 0.0178 per thousand inhabitants, the lowest in the entire autonomous community.

Visually, with just a quick glance at the map we can observe the scarce media coverage in the province.

Figure 2

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Almería with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

If we look at the map, we can see that there is no local news coverage in much of the territory.

3.2. Cádiz

Table 2

Data from the province of Cádiz on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Cádiz	Average per province	Difference
Population	1,245,960	1,059,051	+
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	14.7	12.5	+
Municipalities	44	97.1	-
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	15	10.4	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	34.1	12.8	+
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	21	19.1	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	48	22	+
Media companies	51	26.6	+
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	23.9	12.5	+
Municipalities with media outlet	18	10	+
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	41	13	+
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0409	0.02514044	+
Average SCI	4.25	4.12	+

Source: own research.

The province of Cádiz is surprising due to the numerous local media outlets that are distributed throughout the territory. There are media outlets in: Algeciras, Arcos de la Frontera, Barbate, Barrios (Los), Benalup-Casas Viejas, Cádiz, Chiclana de la Frontera, Conil de la Frontera, Jerez de la Frontera, Línea de la Concepción (La), Puerto de Santa María (El), Puerto Real, Rota, San Fernando, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Tarifa, Ubrique and Vejer de la Frontera.

Cádiz accounts for almost 24% of the Andalusian media companies analysed, despite making up just 14.6% of the total Andalusian population. Unique aspects of this province are that 34% of its municipalities have more than 20,000 inhabitants and 48% have more than 10,000. The percentages for Andalusia are 10.7% and 20%, respectively. All the municipalities in Cádiz with more than 20,000 inhabitants have their own local media, except San Roque. The rest of the media companies are located in municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, with the sole exception being Benalup-Casas Viejas, which has 7,020. In the case of the province of Cádiz, we found that 41% of municipalities have a local newspaper, so the coverage of the territory is quite extensive, with companies both in the coastal region and in the mountains, although given the distribution of the population it is in the former where there is a greater concentration.

Figure 3
Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Cádiz with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

The significant media presence in the territory is linked not only to the size of its cities, but also to the journalistic tradition of the province. Two of the main Andalusian media groups emerged from there: Grupo Joly and Publicaciones del Sur, publisher of the Viva titles. It is also home to significant journalistic ventures, such as *La Voz del Sur* in Jerez de la Frontera. Given these data, we are able to state that there are no significant news deserts in the province of Cádiz.

3.3. Córdoba

Table 3

Data from the province of Córdoba on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Córdoba	Average per province	Difference
Population	776,789	1,059,051	-
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	9.2	12.5	-
Municipalities	76	97.1	-
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	7	10.4	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	9.2	12.8	-
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	12	19.1	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	16	22	-
Media companies	29	26.6	+
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	13.6	12.5	+
Municipalities with media outlet	16	10	+
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	21	13	+
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0373	0.02514044	+
Average SCI	3.88	4.12	-

Source: own research.

Córdoba accounts for 13.6% of the Andalusian media companies analysed, with 16% of its municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants having one. All municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants have local media. The municipalities with media outlets are: Aguilar de la Frontera, Baena, Benamejí, Córdoba, Cabra, Lucena, Montilla, Puente Genil, La Rambla, Porcuna, Palma del Río, Priego de Córdoba, Castro del Río, Santaella, Montemayor and Montalbán de Córdoba.

In the case of the province of Córdoba, we found that 21% of the municipalities have a local newspaper, more than twice the Andalusian average (10%). In some cases, such as the municipalities of Luque (2,945 inhabitants) and Montemayor (3,851 inhabitants), they have their own media outlets despite their very small populations.

Once again, in the case of Córdoba, there is a unique business aspect that must be considered, which is the Comunica | Innovación Social group. This is the entrepreneurial initiative of Juan Pablo Bellido, a journalist and businessman who, with a new low-cost scalable business model, expanded from Montilla to other parts of the province and later to nearby provinces such as Seville.

Figure 4

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Córdoba with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

In the case of Córdoba, there are 0.0373 digital media outlets per thousand inhabitants, the second best figure after the province of Cádiz. Therefore, in this case we cannot speak of a news desert either.

3.4. Granada

Table 4

Data from the province of Granada on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Granada	Average per province	Difference
Population	921,338	1,059,051	-
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	10.9	12.5	-
Municipalities	173	97.1	+
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	8	10.4	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	4.6	12.8	-
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	21	19.1	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	12	22	-
Media companies	18	26.6	-
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	8.5	12.5	-
Municipalities with media outlet	5	10	-
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	3	13	-
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0195	0.02514044	-
Average SCI	4.03	4.12	-

Source: own research.

Granada, despite being the province with the most municipalities, only has eight with more than 20,000 inhabitants, and of these, only three have a media outlet: Granada, Motril and Almuñécar, the provincial capital and the two most important coastal towns, respectively. Apart from these, there are only two municipalities with media companies: Guadix (18,462 inhabitants) and Alhama de Granada (5,667 inhabitants). Therefore, 97% of municipalities that lack their own media company. This province offers the second lowest average figure per thousand inhabitants, at 0.0195. In this case, one can speak of an news desert, as the province has large areas that are uncovered by media.

Figure 5

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Granada with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

3.5. Huelva

Table 5

Data from the province of Huelva on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Huelva	Average per province	Difference
Population	525,835	1,059,051	-
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	6.2	12.5	-
Municipalities	79	97.1	+
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	8	10.4	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	10.1	12.8	-
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	14	19.1	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	18	22	-
Media companies	12	26.6	-
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	5.6	12.5	-
Municipalities with media outlet	5	10	-
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	6	13	-
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0228	0.02514044	-
Average SCI	5.24	4.12	-

Source: own research.

This province has eight municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, but only three of them have their own media outlet; there are no media companies in Lepe, Moguer, Aljaraque or Ayamonte. In the case of Aljaraque and Moguer this may be due to their proximity to the provincial capital, which is home to eight. The other two towns, on the western part of the coast, are very close to Isla Cristina, which does have its own local publication. The other municipalities with media are Punta Umbría (coast), Bonares and El Rocío (halfway to Seville). There is a significant information desert throughout the Sierra de Huelva mountain range, where there is no local media, not even of a regional nature. Only 13% of municipalities have local media. The number of media outlets per thousand inhabitants is 0.0228, which is below the Andalusian average. A unique feature of this province is the quality of the social commitment of its media, which recorded the highest value out of the Andalusian provinces.

Figure 6

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Huelva with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

3.6. Jaén

Table 6

Data from the province of Jaén on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Jaén	Average per province	Difference
Population	627,190	1,059,051	-
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	7.4	12.5	-
Municipalities	96	97.1	-
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	6	10.4	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	6.3	12.8	-
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	15	19.1	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	16	22	-
Media companies	15	26.6	-
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	7.0	12.5	-
Municipalities with media outlet	7	10	-
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	7	13	-
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0239	0.02514044	-
Average SCI	3.84	4.12	-

Source: own research.

Jaén, with 7.4% of the autonomous community's population, also has the same percentage with regards municipalities with local media (7%). It has six municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, four of which have at least one outlet: Jaén, Linares, Úbeda and Alcalá la Real. Andújar and Martos do not have their own. The other towns with their own media coverage are Jódar, Porcuna and Lopera. Twelve percent of Jaén's municipalities have local media. A partial news desert can be seen in the area of the Sierra de Cazorla–Segura mountain range. The number of media outlets per thousand inhabitants is 0.0239, which is below the Andalusian average.

Figure 7

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Jaén with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

3.7. Málaga

Table 7

Data from the province of Málaga on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Málaga	Average per province	Difference
Population	1,695,651	1,059,051	+
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	20.0	12.5	+
Municipalities	102	97.1	+
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	16	10.4	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	15.7	12.8	+
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	19	19.1	-
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	19	22	-
Media companies	36	26.6	+
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	16.9	12.5	+
Municipalities with media outlet	12	10	+
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	12	13	-
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0212	0.02514044	-
Average SCI	3.8	4.12	-

Source: own research.

Málaga is the second most populous province in Andalusia, home to 20% of Andalusians. Its weight in terms of the number of media companies is also considerable, with 17% of the Andalusian total found in the province. The 36 existing media outlets are located in 12 different municipalities (Málaga, Vélez-Málaga, Marbella, Estepona, Benalmádena, Antequera, Ronda, Torremolinos, Alhaurín de la Torre, Alhaurín el Grande, Mijas and Rincón de la Victoria), and thus 88% of municipalities are without specific coverage. Of the 16 municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, there are four without their own media: Fuengirola, Cártama, Coín and Nerja. This is likely due to the proximity to other coastal cities that publish titles in the same area: five in Marbella, five in Vélez-Málaga and three each in Estepona and Benalmádena. Apart from two media outlets (located in Antequera and Ronda), they are all concentrated on the coast, or very close to it. The number of media outlets per thousand inhabitants is 0.0212. The SCI is 3.8, which is lower than the Andalusian average. Once again, a news desert is detected throughout the mountainous area of the province.

Figure 8

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Málaga with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

3.8. Seville

Table 8

Data from the province of Seville on the number of media companies (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Seville	Average per province	Difference
Population	1,947,852	1,059,051	+
Percentage of total population of Andalusia	23.0	12.5	+
Municipalities	105	97.1	+
Municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	17	10.4	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants	16.2	12.8	+
Municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	38	19.1	+
Percentage of municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants	36	22	+
Media companies	39	26.6	+
Percentage of total companies in Andalusia	18.3	12.5	+
Municipalities with media outlet	15	10	+
Percentage of municipalities with media outlet	14	13	+
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.02	0.0251404	-
Average SCI	4.08	4.12	-

Source: own research.

The province of Seville has the largest population, double that of the average percentage for the eight provinces. It has 17 municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants and 38 with more than 10,000. The percentage of municipalities with a media outlet is 14%. There are five municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants that have local media: Los Palacios y Villafranca, Coria del Río, Camas, Bormujos and San Juan de Aznalfarache. All of them, except the first, are part of the metropolitan area of the capital, which has 11 media outlets and which, due to their geographical proximity, may be covered by said outlets. The remaining three municipalities with media companies have more than 10,000 inhabitants. The number of media outlets per thousand inhabitants is 0.02, which is below the Andalusian average, and its average SCI also presents values below the average for the autonomous community. As in the rest of the provinces, the mountainous Sierra Norte area has no media resources. The municipalities with media outlets in the province are: Alcalá de Guadaira, Aljarafe, Carmona, Dos Hermanas, Écija, El Viso del Alcor, Estepa, Lebrija, Mairena del Alcor, Mairena del Aljarafe, Morón de la Frontera, Osuna, San José de la Rinconada, Seville, Tomares and Utrera.

Figure 9

Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the province of Seville with the location of municipalities with media outlets

Source: Database, own research.

3.9. Andalusia

Table 9 presents a summary of the most relevant data. The highest values in each column are highlighted.

Table 9

Summary of the eight Andalusian provinces (SIMA and databases, 2022)

	Almería	Cádiz	Córdoba	Granada	Huelva	Jaén	Málaga	Seville
% of total population of Andalusia	8.6	14.7	9.2	10.9	6.2	7.4	20.0	23.0
Municipalities	102	44	76	173	79	96	102	105
% of municipalities with media outlet	2	41	21	3	6	7	12	14
Average per 1000 inhabitants	0.0178	0.0409	0.0373	0.0195	0.0228	0.0239	0.0212	0.02
Average SCI	3.84	4.25	3.88	4.03	5.24	3.84	3.8	4.08

Source: own research.

Inequalities can be observed within the same autonomous community, with situations as disparate as those seen in the provinces of Cádiz and Almería, aspects that we will discuss below.

4. Conclusions

Identifying news deserts is a complex task. The most appropriate way of doing so is by displaying a map in which the municipalities that have their own or regional media are located, as can be seen in some of the works cited in the theoretical review.

Figure 10
Image showing the PERYBIAN map of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia with the location of municipalities with media outlets
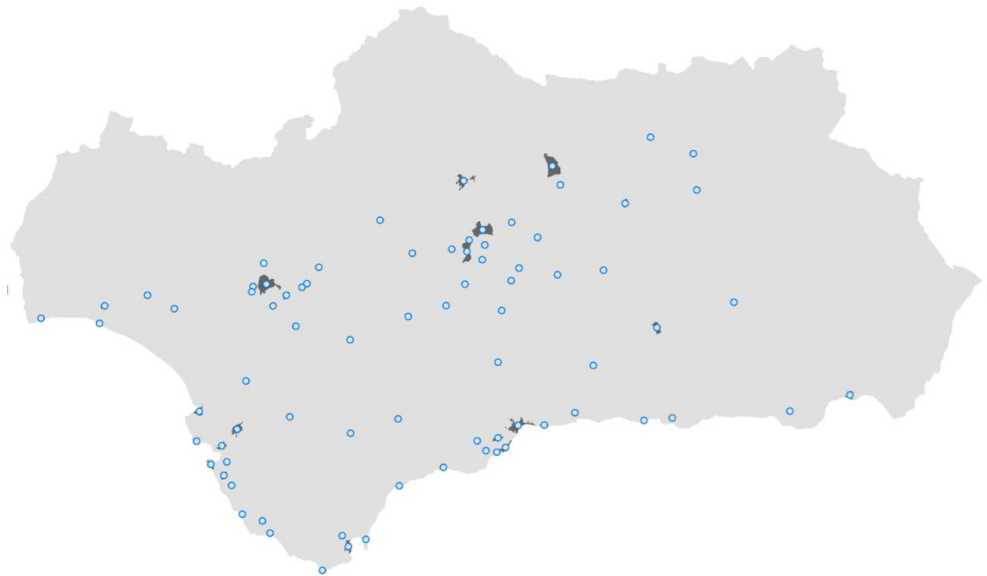
Source: Database, own research.

This research addresses the need to investigate smaller territories than those usually studied (at the national or community level), in order to use more contextual information in understanding the phenomenon of news deserts (Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero and López-García, 2023, p. 301). An analysis of Andalusian provinces has shown that there are very significant differences between each of them, and that at the same time they all share a common factor: an absence of media in mountainous areas. If we look at the map of the autonomous community, the northern area of each of the provinces is lacking in news coverage. This fact can be explained in at least two ways. Firstly, the population density is higher in capital cities and coastal areas and less so in mountainous areas, so it is normal that this is where the media outlets are concentrated. Secondly, the media culture and tradition that has existed in ports and commercial hubs, given their historical need for information since the emergence of the bourgeois merchant class, has provoked inertia, resulting in media outlets emerging in places where one already exists. The second relevant

and expected fact is the relationship between the size of cities and the existence of their own media outlets. The average size of a municipality with a media outlet is over 65,000 inhabitants. Over two-thirds (68.7%) of Andalusian municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants have at least one media outlet. If we look at those with more than 20,000, the percentage skyrockets to 87%.

Differences have also been detected in the number of media outlets per province, which justifies the need for more segmented studies on information deserts that complement those conducted at a higher territorial level. Along those lines, the province with the most resources is Cádiz, with almost 24% of outlets, despite only having 14.7% of the population and 5.7% of all Andalusian municipalities. It is followed by the province of Seville, which has 18% of media companies and 23% of the population. Another of the provinces that stands out is Córdoba—21% of its municipalities have a media outlet (the average across the eight provinces is 13%).

In the cases of Cádiz and Córdoba, the strong data they provide is a direct result of the presence of local business initiatives that have promoted a greater coverage in the province. This is due to the fact that the driving forces behind this obtain a boost as a result of jointly managing several titles or designing low-cost scalable business models. The case of Cádiz is unique: the Joly Group (originally from Cádiz) had three titles (*Diario de Cádiz*, *Diario de Jerez* and *Europa Sur*) before starting its expansion through the eight Andalusian provinces. Founded in 1867, *Diario de Cádiz* is one of the leading media outlets not only in Andalusia, but also in Spain. Its roots in the territory and the opening of other local newspapers has quite possibly spurred the development of this industry in the province.

On the other hand, the case of Almería is worth a mention, as neither its economic development nor its long coastline have enabled a strong local press to grow outside the provincial capital, beyond which there is only one media outlet.

From this Andalusian x-ray of the local digital press, it is possible to open several avenues of investigation that allow us to understand the causes of the phenomena detected and address them from other complementary perspectives. Does the existence of communication faculties in certain provinces affect the proliferation of local digital media? Is it profitable to have local media in towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants? In the case of local media outlets with a provincial dimension that provide information on several localities in the area, could it be considered that they satisfactorily cover the news requirements of those municipalities? The creation of the map showing the local digital press in Andalusia is a first step in the study of information and news deserts in the region, as well as their causes and possible solutions; answering these questions will, without doubt, provide an improved perspective.

5. References

Abernathy, P. M. (2018). *The Expanding news dessert. Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Abernathy, P. M. (2020). *News deserts and ghost newspapers: will local news survive?* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Anderson, C. W. (2013). *Rebuilding the news: metropolitan journalism in the digital age.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Barnett, S. (2009). *Journalism, Democracy and Public Interest: Rethinking media pluralism for Digital Age.* Working Paper, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Oxford.

Barnett, S. and Townend, J. (2015). Plurality, policy and the local. *Journalism Practice*, *9* (3).

Bogart, L. (1985). *La prensa y su público.* Eunsa.

Cage, J. (2015). *Salvar los medios de comunicación.* Anagrama.

Camponez, C. (2002). *Jornalismo de proximidade.* Coimbra: Minerva.

Caro-González, F. J., Rivas-de-Roca, R., Garrido-Lora, M. and García-Gordillo, M. (2024). Indicador de Compromiso Social (ICS) en el periodismo de proximidad: hacia un modelo de calidad en los medios locales. *El profesional de la Información*, *33*(2). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2024.0219

Cebrián, J. L. (2020). La muerte del libro. *El País*, Babelia, 18 de mayo.

Claussen, D. S. (2020). Digesting the report, news deserts and ghost newspapers: will local news survive? *Newspaper research journal*, *41*, 3, 255-259. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739532920952195

Ferrier, M., Sinha, G. and Outrich, M. (2016). Media Deserts: Monitoring the changing media ecosystem. *The Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix it.* https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-94925-0_14

Hess, K. and Waller, L. (2017). *Local journalism in a digital world.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Izquierdo Labella, L. (2010). *Manual de periodismo local.* Fragua.

Jenkins, J. and Nielsen, R. K. (2020). Proximity, public service, and popularity: a comparative study of how local journalists view quality news. *Journalism studies*, *21*, 2, 236-253. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1636704

Lee, M. and Butler, B. (2019). How are information deserts created? A theory of local information landscapes. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, *70*(2).

López-García, X., Negreira-Rey, M. C. and Rodríguez-Vázquez, A. I. (2016). Cibermedios hiperlocales ibéricos: el nacimiento de una nueva red de proximidad. *Cuadernos.info*, 39, 225-240. https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.39.966

Magasic, M. and Hess, K. (2021). Mining a news desert: The impact of a local newspaper's closure on political participation and engagement in the rural Australian town of Lightning Ridge. *Australian journalism review*, *43*, 1, 99-114. http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/ajr_00059_7

Miller, J. (2018). News dessert. No news is bad news. *Urban Policy*, 2 de octubre.

Morais, R., Jerónimo, P. and Correia, J. C. (2020). Jornalismo na região centro. Covilhã: LabCom. ISBN: 978 9 896546922

Napoli, P. M., Stonbely, S., McCollough, K. and Renninger, B. (2019). Local journalism and the information needs of local communities*. Journalism practice*, *13*, 8, 1024-1028. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1647110

Negredo Bruna, S. and Martínez-Costa, M. P. (2021). Tipos de medios nativos digitales: Plataformas, alcance geográfico, lenguas y grupos empresariales. In R. Salaverría y M. P. Martínez-Costa (Eds.), *Medios nativos digitales en España* (pp. 35-54). Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones.

Negreira-Rey, M. C., Vázquez-Herrero, J. and López-García, X. (2023). No people, no news: News deserts and areas at risk in Spain. *Media and Communication*, *11*(3), 293-303. https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/6727

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C. T. and Kleis-Nielsen, R. (2024). *Digital News Report 2023*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Nielsen, R. K. (2015). Local newspapers as keystone media: the increased importance of diminished newspapers for local political information environments. In R. K. Nielsen (Ed.), *Local journalism: the decline of newspapers and the rise of digital media* (pp. 51-72). London: I.B. Tauris.

Nielsen, R. K. (2016). Folk Theories of Journalism: the many faces of a local newspaper. *Journalism Studies*, *17*/7. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1165140

Nygren, G. (2019). Local media ecologies. *Nordicom review*, *40*/2, 51-67. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2019-0026

Ragnhild, Kr. O. and Birgit Røe, M. (2023). Deserted Local News: Exploring News Deserts From a Journalistic Recruitment Perspective. *Media and Communication*, *11*/3. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6738

Ramos, G., Torre, L. and Jerónimo, P. (2023). No media, no voters? The relationship between news deserts and voting abstention. *Social sciences*, *12*/6, 345. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12060345

Ramos, G. and Torre, L. (2023). Jornalismo comunitário no contexto dos desertos de notícias. In P. V. Melo y P. Jerónimo (Eds.), *Comunicação comunitária e jornalismo de proximidade: diálogos e desafios em cenários de crises* (pp. 119-142). Covilhã: LabCom Books. ISBN: 9789896549459

Rivas-de-Roca, R., García-Gordillo, M. and Caro-González, F. J. (2020). La construcción del periodismo 'localizado' en medios digitales europeos. Estudio de casos. *Revista latina de comunicación social*, 75, 1-26. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1414

Salaverría, R., Martínez-Costa, M.-P., Negredo, S., Paisana, M. and Crespo, M. (2022). IBERIFIER Digital Media Dataset (1.1.0) [Data set]. *Zenodo*. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7335551

Schudson, M. (1995). *The Power of the News.* Harvard University Press.

Usher, N. (2023). The Real Problems with the Problem of News Deserts: Toward Rooting Place, Precision, and Positionality in Scholarship on Local News and Democracy. *Political Communication*, *40/2.* https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2023.2175399

Waschková Císařová, L. (2023). Backed Into a Corner: Structural Changes That Lead to Local News Deserts. *Media and Communication*, *11/3.*

Weber, M. S. and Mathews, N. (2022). Explicating local: an audience-based framing of local community and local news. *Digital journalism.* https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2142629

Francisco J. Caro González

He holds a PhD in business administration and is a full professor in the Faculty of Communication at the University of Seville. He was lead researcher on the "Journalistic information and well-being: analysis of the social function of the Andalusian journalistic company" (US-1380696) and "Meeting the information needs of women. Analysis of the journalistic enterprise from a gender perspective" (INVM PR041-07) projects. His research is focused on the management of media companies, paying special attention to organisational change, entrepreneurship and gender in journalistic and advertising organisations.

Mar García-Gordillo

She is an adjunct professor at the Department of Journalism II at the University of Seville's Faculty of Communication. She is lead researcher of the Communication and Social Sciences (SEJ-619) research group and director of the RTVE-Seville University Chair of Cultural Content and Creativity in the Audiovisual and Digital sector. She has taken part in various research projects at the national level and her lines of research revolve around information and national and international political communication and gender studies, and local digital media. She has just completed a project on Journalism and Social Welfare in Andalusia (PERYBIAN), of which this article is the result.

Ofa Bezunartea Valencia

Journalist, professor of journalism at the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU). She has practised local journalism for 25 years. Professor of journalism at the UPV-EHU from 1982 until her retirement in 2010. She was a guest professor at the University of Seville from 2003 to 2010. She received her doctorate in journalism in 1986 with the thesis "Basque journalists during the transition". She has authored and co-author several books, including: *Memorias de la violencia, Noticias e ideología profesional, La Prensa ante el cambio de Siglo, Los límites de la información política, Los medios de comunicación en el País Vasco, La élite de los periodista en España, 21 Lecciones de reporterismo and La prensa y los eLectores.*

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

A Look at Olive Grove Monoculture: Public Policies around Private Production

Mirando el monocultivo del olivar: políticas públicas en torno a una producción privada

Juan Sergio Quesada-Aguilar
University of Jaén, Spain
jsquesad@ujaen.es

José-Luis Anta-Félez
University of Jaén, Spain
jlanta@ujaen.es

ABSTRACT

Given its widespread growth and economic importance, the olive plays a significant role in the society of the province of Jaén. Its magnitude has sparked far-reaching debate, both in terms of time and form, between those who insist that it is a necessity that must be engrained in the province and those who argue that this crop constitutes a burden for its development. The existence of a crop landscape determined by human action—in which public policies converge with the search for the greatest profitability in land exploitation in most cases, as opposed to other cases where this is seemingly the only possible alternative—has led to the crop becoming identified as an unmistakable part of the essence of Jaén. This trait has not only been promoted but also desired by the public authorities, who have seen in the olive and its cultivation an opportunity to build common identity markers in a territory and population that are much more than simply economically dependent on the crop. These reflections are based on the analysis of public policies in the land market during contemporary times and how these policies are essential for the expansion of olive growth when the appropriate moment arises, turning it into a sign of identity and public expression of Jaén and, by extension, other olive-growing areas of Andalusia and Spain. And yet, this imagined cultural reality remains stagnant in an increasingly distant past, facing a present everyday life where agricultural work and non-mechanised human labour are residual, while the olive grove continues to expand into the increasingly scarce areas of land that remain uncolonised. And this is before we even consider the social and environmental costs that the monopoly of olive cultivation has generated and continues to generate.

KEYWORDS: olive grove; innovation; market; rationality; cultivation.

RESUMEN

El olivar, por su extensión e importancia económica, es determinante en la sociedad jiennense. Su magnitud ha generado debates de largo alcance, en el tiempo y en la forma, entre los que sostienen su imbricación necesaria con la provincia frente a los que defienden que este cultivo constituye un lastre para su desarrollo. La existencia de un cultivo-paisaje determinado por la acción antrópica, en el que confluyen políticas públicas con la búsqueda de la mayor rentabilidad en la explotación de la tierra, en la mayoría de los casos, frente a otros casos donde se convierte en la aparentemente única alternativa posible, ha llevado a la identificación del cultivo con el ser de Jaén, algo no solo potenciado sino deseado por los poderes públicos, que han visto en el olivar y su cultura una oportunidad de construir unas señas de identidad comunes, en un territorio y unas gentes que son mucho más que la dependencia económica del cultivo. Estas reflexiones parten del análisis de las políticas públicas en el mercado de la tierra durante la época contemporánea, y cómo estas son imprescindibles para la expansión olivarera cuando se dé el momento apropiado, llegando a suponer un signo de identidad y expresión pública de Jaén y por extensión de otras zonas olivareras de Andalucía y España. Y, sin embargo, esta realidad cultural imaginada solo existe estancada en un pasado cada vez más lejano, frente a una cotidianidad presente donde las labores agrícolas y el trabajo humano no mecanizado en las mismas es residual, mientras el olivar sigue expandiéndose en los cada vez más escasos predios que aún siguen sin colonizar. Todo lo anterior sin tener en cuenta los costes sociales y ambientales que el monopolio del cultivo ha generado y genera.

PALABRAS CLAVE: olivar; innovacion; mercado; racionalidad; cultivo.

> *Andaluces de Jaén,*
> *aceituneros altivos,*
> *pregunta mi alma: ¿de quién,*
> *de quién son estos olivos? ("Andalusians of Jaén, to whom do these lofty olive trees*
> *belong, my soul asks?")*
>
> Miguel Hernández

1. Introduction. A tree in context

The province of Jaén encompasses 587,932 hectares of olive groves—almost 25% of all of Spain's olive trees, producing 2,779,265 tonnes of olives each year—which are responsible for 47.2% of Spain's total olive oil production, some 525,360 tonnes (Andalusian regional Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, 2021). It is interesting to compare these figures with those of the quantity of Andalusian olive oil that is exported: 506,429 tonnes is sold in bulk and 347,694 tonnes in bottles, totalling 854,122 tonnes. This means that Jaén produces roughly the same amount of olive oil as the total that is exported in bulk. Without there being full equivalence, it is a fact that the producers do not participate in the sale of packaged oil; in fact, the oil mills themselves do not export packaged oil, which is the

task of the packaging companies, and the provincial market is therefore controlled by a few people who are tiny players in the global food market (Blas, 2022). These data show that the province of Jaén, in addition to being the largest producer of olive oil in Spain, is dependent on an export crop sold in specialised global markets, and, therefore, dependent on said markets. In this article we will discuss the origins of this situation of monoculture and dependence, analyse the main causes and examine the proposed alternatives.

In the first section we will begin by addressing the historical context that, through the freeing up of land, allowed cultivation of the crop to grow. We will continue by analysing public policies and support for the advancement and modernisation of crops. We will then turn our attention to the new production models that are constantly being introduced in the field. Next, we will focus on the creation of a cultural model that is separate from the reality of productive practice before ending with our conclusions, which suggest that the future is only bright inasmuch as it continues to be profitable. This work is the result of myriad conversations, reflections, readings, notes, previous works and participant observation by its authors, as well as the active practice of the profession of olive growers and/or the participation in mill management bodies and second-degree cooperatives. Likewise, it owes much to informal interviews with people linked to olive growing, direct producers, suppliers of mills, managers of cooperative societies, mill owners, managers of distribution companies and laboratory managers. After all this, and with the risk of turning into heretics:

> In fact, in all these groups there is a degree of distancing that none of its members can overcome without appearing in the eyes of the group as a heretic (and turning into one), regardless of whether their ideas or theories agree with observable facts and approach what we call truth (Elias, 1990, pp. 26–28).

But as a substantial method, and substantiated by the work presented here, it is about understanding the functions of human groups where it is necessary to know from within how subjects experience the groups of which they form part and those that are alien to them—and this cannot be known without active participation and commitment. It's only a matter of coming to grips with it, of understanding actions and their causes:

> [...] the historian or sociologist also does not trust the pure narrative logic that emerges from the chronological concatenation of events but tries to understand them using comparative analyses. It is, in fact, a matter of understanding and interpreting the phenomenon with the help of concepts and even theory, but without the concept or theories going beyond what is necessary for the interpretation of the meaning that individual or collective subjects gave to their action and the understanding of the structural determinations that make it possible (Juliá, 1989, pp. 74–75).

Without further ado, from this heuristic perspective, we can address this work and consider the history of the olive grove as an example of continuous innovation in

crop management, product production, oil uses and marketing. We understand innovation to be the incorporation of technical improvements in our tools—in addition to human improvements—which, within the logic of the market, involves making changes so as to increase profits. The counterpart of this innovation is the cost it has on society, the environment and landscapes. These innovations are closely tied to liberal public policies and the development of capitalism since the beginning of the period dubbed as the world economy by Wallerstein (1989), during which time the crops of the Guadalquivir valley were oriented towards export to the American market, with an increase in olive oil demand thanks to its liturgical, food, lighting and other uses (Bernal, 1974). This naturally increased the amount of land used for olive cultivation, although it was still limited to the worst plots of land.

The arrival of liberal reforms, and their corresponding political innovations, which led to modifications to the medieval land tenure structures, something more apparent than real, lay the foundation for the constant increase in area and production of olive cultivation. The logic of market profit (Weber, 1984), conservative individualist public policies of change, under which new owners were able to defend their acquisitions/appropriations, are part of the new liberal society in which political and economic power merge. These changes can be traced back to the end of the 18th century, when physiocracy prevailed and capitalism was in its infancy, and—as stated in Jovellanos' 1795 Report in the Dossier of the Agrarian Law—attempts were being made to increase the profitability of the land, which gave rise to the privatization of wasteland and communal forests, the dissolution of the *Mesta* (an association that protected livestock owners, established in the 13th century and active until 1836), the closure of farms and the contractual freedom of leases, all to the detriment of traditional ways of production and life, in the case of the *Mesta*, and of the granaries that controlled grain to limit the impact of the unrelenting subsistence crises. The Spanish War of Independence and the subsequent independence of the American territories directly affected the income of the elite, and land became the main source of value—with the best land being of a higher quality, having access to water and located closer to urban settlements—which contributed to the emergence of the urban phenomenon.

The dream of creating a class made up of property owners who were in favour of the new regime, truncated by the State's debts caused by the successive wars, was not achieved with the confiscations of the Cortes de Cádiz (1810–1814), the Liberal Triennium (1820–1823), Mendizábal (1836–1837), Espartero (1841) and Madoz (1854–1856), which created richer, more powerful property-owning classes, which coincided with those that already existed under the Ancient Regime, while the less favoured—the tenants, sharecroppers, day labourers and small farm owners—were stripped of their traditional livelihoods. If we take the confiscation of 1836 as an example, the municipal councils in charge of the plots made sure they were of such a size that small landowners would effectively be ruled out from purchasing them, but not the wealthy oligarchies.

The creation of a land market was supposed to be an innovation that reflected social revitalisation, through greater private land ownership thanks to an increase in the number of small- and medium-sized landowners, but not only did it lack the sup-

posed "invisible hand", it was even designed in such a way so as to promote inequality of ownership. In the end, the innovation of liberalism, joining property with freedom, was divergent, bifurcating liberalism itself into two political currents, based on social commitment and clearly differing in political and economic views. In some geographical areas, based on their geographical or historical characteristics (such as feudal rights), a class of small- and medium-sized landowners was also established, which is fundamental in understanding the expansion of the olive grove. An example is the case of the Sierra Mágina region, and the land distribution made after the Reconquista (Quesada, 1989).

During the 19th century, beyond conflictive political alternation, we can identify some constants: the intensification of confiscation and the division and use of new lands for cultivation at the expense of forests and communal land (Araque, 1993). The conservative restoration of the late 19th century, when the new elite was consolidated, brought about protectionist public policies (Garrabou, 1990) thanks to diverse types of legislation, bureaucratic obstacles, and elaborate procedures. These conventions and regulations were decisive in promoting the expansion of the olive grove, coinciding with the arrival of the grape phylloxera plague, which ended with grape vines being replaced by olive trees following the crisis at the turn of the century.

Industrialism, the First World War and the new use of olive oil as a lubricant prior to the discovery of synthetic alternatives sparked the so-called "golden age of the olive grove" (Zambrana, 1987). The crop's success was overwhelming, with the area used for olive cultivation increasing by 58.43%—or 121,712 hectares—between 1913 and 1935, dwarfing figures recorded in the rest of Spain (Gallego and Sánchez, 2013), something that would have been difficult to achieve if it were not for the circumstances analysed above. The main cost of this innovation was the social problem caused by the ballooning number of day laborers and small and medium-sized landowners whose livelihoods depended on this crop. At that moment in time, environmental problems, such as deforestation, erosion and fires, were not as prominent as the social issues, even though they were condemned. The dynamics of innovation in cultivation cannot be disentangled from the prevailing land ownership structures. Large estates viewed the olive tree as a viable use for marginal land, whereas smaller landholders —motivated by concerns over soil quality— diversified their production. These proprietors balanced subsistence farming (including food and oil for lighting, at a time when electricity remained largely urban) with the monetisation of their harvests, particularly in years of olive scarcity.It was common practice to pay money on account before the sale of the product—oil in all its forms and involving all kinds of stakeholders—where the mills and their owners replaced the financial institutions, and continue to do so. These interactions were uneven, given that, although mill owners received a percentage for the processing work, they undertook, known as the *maquila* or toll (Zambrana, 1987), the perception was that they used their knowledge of the market to obtain greater profits. These conflicts lie at the root of the rise of cooperativism during the 1960s, the dictatorship's response to the social problems generated by the abuses of private industrialists and which constituted a defense for the most modest owners, in an act of political corporatism that ensured control and power in the towns.

2. The arrival of public policies

In no case did public policies imply an attack on cultivation and its expansion, neither before nor after the Spanish Civil War; freedom of cultivation was already institutionalised in the 19th century and was never cast into doubt. Property ownership reforms and improvements to olive growing were proposed during the Second Republic, with the implementation of irrigation being the main proposal made since the Restoration, formulated during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, and further developed during the Franco regime. After the war, once the Republic's efforts to divide and redistribute work under the Agrarian Reform were undone, the new leaders focused on solving the social problems surrounding farming, accentuated by the ruralisation that occurred upon the conclusion of the Civil War and the autarchic policies and the international isolation to which the triumphant party was subjected. The National Institute of Colonisation was set up for this purpose, although in the case of the olive it did not slow down the sustained implantation that was happening in the province of Jaén (Araque *et al.*, 2002; Gallego, 2014). Overall, the public policies were focused more on creating infrastructure, including colonisation villages, and increasing the total irrigated area, with the miraculous logic that an increase in the production of irrigated olive groves would solve the existing problems. The goal of these colonisation villages was to allocate a certain number of people to live in these villages and work the surrounding estates, which only grew other crops in the event that they offered higher yields—like cereal, cotton and beetroot—in line with the protectionist logic of the dictatorship, as well as olives. These crops, in addition to those required for subsistence outside the large commercial markets, resulted in the province becoming an exporter of products that were either unprocessed or underwent minimal transformation, following the logic of underdeveloped economies. It is interesting to note how nowadays these areas correspond to those in which *super-intensive* olive groves were planted (Sánchez *et al.*, 2022), although it remains to be seen whether they are only limited to these spaces. Everything depends on the profitability of the crop and the decrease in costs through manual labour being completely replaced by mechanised means, which may mean that this form of cultivation can be extrapolated to large areas susceptible to new plantations that replace the scarce existing alternative crops and/or the replacement of traditional olive groves.

Meanwhile, the private sector increased its cultivation on forest land. Postwar ruralisation and the impossibility of emigrating led to land being tilled that otherwise would not have been. Action was taken in the public sector through 1953's Jaén Plan, which constituted the Francoist dictatorship's attempt to plan the industrial development of the province and resolve the dramatic social situation. Regarding olive groves, in addition to training policies and the constant expansion of irrigation, we must highlight the interest in by-products beyond their traditional uses in livestock feed, oil mill boilers and the pomace, soap and oil industry: they served the double purpose of avoiding waste and obtaining an economic profit. It is significant that the authors who delve into the Jaén Plan, both in the full studies (Gallego, 2013) and

in partial studies, and particularly those on the use of the aforementioned by-products (Martín, 2017), talk of failure or lost opportunities, which already indicates that these measures were successful. The lack of success of the industrial policy stands in contrast to the innovation involved in the cultivation of olive trees and the consequent increase in the cultivated area—which spiked again in the sixties thanks to emigration—as a result of the progressive mechanisation of agricultural work, leading to olive cultivation taking on an agro-industrial character. The emigration to the industrialised cities of northern Spain and/or the rest of Europe was the perfect solution to the province's social problems; in particular, emigration was the only job opportunity for the olive groves' surplus workers, landless day labourers and small- and/or medium-sized landowners who supplemented their income from the olive grove with other jobs, and who in all cases found themselves in a precarious economic situation. The solution to the social problem in Jaén—a lack of job opportunities—was, and still is, solved by emigration.

Although the emigration that took place in the final decades of the twentieth century differs from contemporary patterns —particularly in terms of migrants' educational profiles— the underlying dynamics remain unchanged. Labour in the olive sector continues to be seasonal, requiring large numbers of low-skilled workers during short, intensive harvest periods. Outside these windows, such labour becomes surplus to the system's needs, a structural dilemma that, as the scientific literature repeatedly underscores, has historically been resolved —and continues to be— through emigration. As for the labour needs of the olive season, these have been met through hiring temporary, itinerant workers who take precarious and seasonal jobs (Menor, 2007). This aspect is shared with other capitalist Western countries (Bruder, 2020), in our case non-EU countries, who replace their workers with those from the Maghreb or sub-Saharan Africa, something well studied in the case of strawberries in Huelva (Pinto and Castro, 2023). In any case, the variety of contexts in which the activity takes place, as well as the variety of farms, means that the maximum influx of low-cost labour is still decisive, replacing mechanisation, which involves higher costs (Graeber, 2018). As for the province's social problem, the emigration-based solution has been so successful, as backed up by the data, that the population in Jaén does not stop decreasing. Therefore, for the year 2022:

> The official population figures of the Municipal Register as of 1 January 2022 show that the population in the province of Jaén stands at 623,761, which represents 7.34% of the regional total and 1.31% of the national total. While in Andalusia and Spain the population has increased over the last five years by 1.38% and 1.61%, respectively, in the province of Jaén it has dropped by 2.25% (INE, 2023).

This social situation explains why the different plans devised to "modernize" the province, namely the Provincial Magna Assembly of 1924, the Jaén Plan of 1953 and even more recent ones such as Activa Jaén, have tended to consider olive monoculture as a problem, although none offered any serious alternatives to the prevalence

of its cultivation, among other reasons because doing so would mean acknowledging that there is no other alternative within a market economy where agriculture is subordinated to the specialization of the productive space within the world's largest markets (Krugman and Wells, 2016) and the logics of world capitalism, something very flexible and adaptive, even *axiomatic* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). Therefore, although we are talking about agricultural production areas, it is not too difficult to observe the emergence of *archipelagos* of specialisation and the circulation of both material and human regional *flows* (Lacour, 1996, pp. 25–48), as well as, in many contexts, paradoxical processes like hyperspeculation, mechanisation and productive flexibility (for *Taylorist* logics, see Coriat, 2000; Palerm, 1999, pp. 154–180), together with the *essentialisation* and identity heritage of certain products or crops, whether via organic production or designations of origin.

3. New production models

We pointed out above the importance of small-medium properties in the expansion of olive groves (Infante, 2012). Large properties became interested in growing crops later than other crops such as cereals. Among the reasons highlighted, in addition to productivity, are the progressive increase of food consumption and the protectionism that had prevailed since the beginning of the 20th century, but was particularly decisive during the Franco administration, when ration books were handed out; new markets were created in areas where other fats were traditionally consumed, as is the case of the north of the peninsula; and the prices of the controlled market were regulated, which guaranteed profits for the owners, who began to gain importance and power based on the size of their property. In the end, it is possible to identify a parallel between the political-social elite and olive grove ownership, establishing a scale that rises from the local level to the provincial and national level, wherein wealth becomes indistinguishable from owning olive trees and one's level of wealth is measured in hectares of land and/or number of trees. Guaranteed prices, beyond the black market—profiteering and corruption—were key to achieving state support for increased production and a captive market. State protectionism, and the international changes that occurred from the 1970s onwards, had a significant impact on cereal markets that fuelled expansion to replace other less profitable export crops (Blas, 2022). This *status quo* was altered with the arrival of political change, the Transition, resulting in the forced liberalisation of markets and offensive by multinationals in the vegetable fat sector (sunflower, soyabean and rapeseed) at the end of the seventies, with the market for these products exploding, production increasing following the green revolution and production subsidies leading to increased surpluses. In these trade wars, marketing strategies touched on international academic studies that pointed out the carcinogenic properties of the oil, which resulted in near-reaching responses on the national and local level, precursors of the academic-institutional development of support and defense of the industry, creating a social consensus to defend the product and its prosperity, with the social consensus becoming a sign of identity. In this commercial dispute, the sector was "helped" by the tragic toxic oil syndrome scandal caused by the consumption of denatured rapeseed oil (rapeseed

oil mixed with industrial oils), which occurred in the early 1980s, leading to death and associated diseases and society's eventual rejection of this type of fat, as it began to connect its consumption with the scandal, thus destroying the market possibilities of this fat. Another improvement brought about by this unfortunate event was greater control around sale and packaging, the creation of digital object identifiers (DOIs) and protected geographic indications (PGIs), which, together with the EU's agricultural policies—which now applied to Spain since its accession to the EEC in 1986—put a stop to the sale of oil as had been done traditionally: in containers without any type of approval and guarantee, a source of all kinds of scams and corruption.

Since joining the EEC, European agricultural policy has had an influence on the olive grove, but as we have pointed out throughout this work, it has not negatively affected the increase in cultivation, which has continued to grow (Cuesta *et al.*, 1998). However, it is true that, during the early stages, the productivity phase encouraged more cultivation, which went hand in hand with production subsidies. Being a single payment, we could be led to believe that it discouraged cultivation, but the increase in production and production areas seem to indicate otherwise. With Agenda 2000 and the introduction of rural development policy, alternatives were sought that never ended up being viable replacements for olive cultivation. It must be acknowledged that thanks to Europe, there has been a trend in some areas towards more sustainable models of cultivation, and even organic cultivation, although most production continues to follow productivist models of income maximisation. This micromanagement does not only come from Europe; provincial institutions have also been promoting the protection of the olive grove landscape sought by UNESCO. Without going into whether or not this is the correct thing to do, we can see that the constant identified throughout this work—the private ownership of the crop and the logic of searching for maximum profits that sustains it—has meant that this initiative has been rejected by some of the owners, which has all but ruined it.

Limiting the analysis of olive cultivation to a purely market-based perspective —a common analytical tendency— risks falling into a form of economic determinism that this work seeks to avoid. Innovations in crop management and processes of specialization are seldom reducible to market pressures alone. As we have already demonstrated, public policies were not merely relevant but essential to the expansion of the olive sector. Nonetheless, other explanatory factors must be considered. We have no systematic evidence of the reason for choosing one crop over another over time, beyond the usual economic profitability, though we can consider other factors: the problems of mechanisation (it is possible to grow olive trees without it); the lower quality of the land; the orography of the mountainous areas of Jaén, which are more useful for tree cultivation; the size of the farms (for example, cereal harvesters stopped using certain plots for their regular harvesting cycles due to their isolation or size); the costs of harvesting surpass those of cultivation, as occurs in the classic example of a continuous drop in cereal prices; the productivist incentives of the common agricultural policy (CAP); the need for new, costly machinery that is not worth the expense given the size and concentration of the plots. We could even speak of the olive tree being a crop of resistance for small owners, as it does not require a large investment when grown on small plots and it covers the fam-

ily's oil needs with few working days a year. The opposite is true when it comes to large properties, which seek investments that make labour as cheap as possible, as long as it is not so cheap that it makes the acquisition of another technology to replace it inefficient, or the control of the market is so powerful that it makes any innovation in the search for greater profit unnecessary. The ultimate goal of innovation is always to obtain greater profit with lower costs, at least from the perspective of marginalist theory. These explanations can be considered alongside others that have been studied in greater depth, such as the structure of ownership, manufacturing, and sale. By this we seek to explain the complexity and richness of the olive grove, and the separate ways of approaching it, although a more heuristic vision is required. But, before we tackle the issue from the cultural viewpoint, we will briefly discuss the state of the oil industry in the province.

An analysis of the production data, in the traditional sense proposed by econometrics, shows us greater uniformity, in other words, that it has great continuity. We continue to see that the majority of the product is still sold in bulk, amounting to 473,146 of the 795,207 tonnes in total, with packaging companies bottling 322,061 tonnes and also selling 148,905 tonnes in bulk (mills and refineries sell everything in bulk, at 157,470 and 161,903 tonnes, respectively) (Observatorio de Precios y Mercados, 2022). As we can see, there are large volumes sold in a market that is controlled by very few people, an oligopoly that is interested in maintaining the *status quo* that generates large profit margins. Economic logic tells us that this productive-commercial structure represents a *pyramid system*, which is obviously associated with the existence of *oligopolies* at the commercial level (López Ontiveros, 1978, pp. 19–40). Such a productive structure certainly seems to be linked to all cash crops, from tea to opium poppy and coca, although it appears to be much more evident in "longer-term" commercial crops, such as coffee, and not so much in products with less commercial potential like olive oil (Palacios, 2007).

It is interesting to note that in the ranking of sector companies (ElEconomista. es 2024) based on the sales data of companies with the national economic activity code 1043: Manufacture of Olive Oil, of the 511 existing at the national level, only 88 are based in Jaén. These include Descuella Aceites del Sur-Coosur S.A., which finds itself in second place in the ranking with a turnover of 876,713,632 euros, behind only Dcoop S. Coop. Andaluza, which recorded a turnover of 1,236,973,106 euros and which, although based in Málaga, is a second-degree cooperative and includes a few of first-degree cooperatives from Jaén. Far behind these companies in the ranking we have Aceitunas Jaén Sociedad Limitada at number 18, with a turnover of 42,125,615 euros, and Emilio Vallejo S.A., with 38,750,617 euros, in 19th place, both of which are traditional companies operating in the province. We have to jump all the way down to number 32 to find the next one, Explotaciones Jame SL, with a turnover of 24,316,352, and further still to number 50 in the ranking to find the first cooperative, Sociedad Cooperativa Andaluza Unión de Úbeda, with 16,924,417 euros in turnover. Of the 88 existing companies, 15 (17.04%) have a turnover of more than 12 million euros. There is no data available for the remainder, although 25 (28.41%) indicate that they have a large turnover, which suggests that they have assets of over 40 million euros, although we do not know this for sure. These companies are all found between number 71 and 169 in the ranking. A smaller proportion—26 companies (29.54%)—represent

medium-sized companies, with up to 40 million euros in assets according to Spanish law. Small companies, with assets of less than 4 million euros, account for 22 (25%) of existing companies. A reading of this data shows that there are few large companies with a strong turnover compared to many medium and small companies with low turnover. So, we can identify a few constants regarding sales: the large number of bulk sales, the concentration of packaged sales with an increasing dependence on exports and the fragmentation of sales to the domestic market.

4. The universalisation of an archetype

When we talk about the olive-growing culture, we understand both the general public's perception and the construction in the collective imagination of the universe of the olive grove in which elements of traditional cultivation converge with accessories typical of economic and political marketing, seeking to create an identity of the ilk of Benedict Anderson's (2005) imagined communities, which do not correspond to the socio-economic reality of it, historically based on the productivist logic of the market where only profit mattered and where other costs such as social or environmental, loss of land, desertification, the disappearance of fauna due to the use of pesticides and plant protection products, among others, are only resolved by circumstances unrelated to cultivation. The social costs because of a result of emigration are mitigated in the case of environmental costs thanks to the obligations imposed by community policies regarding monetary aid or penalties on collection of CAP aid and subsidies. Today we are witnessing a greater concentration of exploitation, via ownership and other forms of tenure, and forms of cultivation that are typical of agribusiness (Etxezarreta, 2006).

Alongside this model of agriculture oriented toward industrial export, a constructed imaginary has emerged —one rooted in a social reality shaped by the pervasive presence of the olive grove. After more than a century of crop substitution, the olive tree has become intertwined with virtually every stratum of Jaén's society, to varying degrees. This symbolic association transcends economic logic, embedding the olive grove not only in the landscape but also in the collective cultural memory and identity of the region. Aside from the fact that the province's economic activities are linked to the olive grove and its crops, as can be seen from the data on agricultural income from the Andalusian regional Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (2022), there is also an interdependence with other economic sectors that are related to the profits of the harvests. This central place in the economy, historically connected to the crop's pre-eminence as regards employment, means that in the imaginary of the inhabitants of the province the agricultural tasks surrounding the olive tree—and within these tasks, the main job being the collection of olives for olive oil production—embody the image of work par excellence. Although the tasks have evolved over time with the introduction of innovations (the mechanization of production processes, developments within the industry, tillage and harvesting, as well as in the management and forms of cultivation), in the collective imaginary of the population of Jaén, which for the most part no longer has any ties to the olive grove, or at least not directly, the romanticized image of harvest persists. In terms of moulding this image, certain public Andalusian television

programmes have had an undeniable and indelible influence, wherein the difficulty of the work was compensated by the supposed values on which it was based: friendship, companionship, and simplicity. And all this took place within a job structure that divided by gender, where the men shook the trees and the women collected the olives off the ground using the traditional tools such as poles, baskets, and canvases. This image has also become a kind of idealised model of popular clothing, something that it shares with other territories in mainland Spain, where these new popular, regional "costumes" are interwoven with a strong feeling of belonging and differentiation, such as, for example, the Huertanos in Murcia and the white festive uniforms of Navarre and Aragón, where the only difference is the colour of the scarf worn around the neck: red in Navarre, green in Huesca, blue in the towns of Zaragoza, alongside the traditional *cachirulo*, which is more typical of the latter and, by extension, the surrounding region. The institutions, municipalities and councils have played a fundamental role in creating this imaginary through the establishment and institutionalisation of designated days throughout the year dedicated to the harvest (such as Town Council of Martos, 2024), something that we also find in the rest of Spain, each with its own local specificity. In the case of Jaén and its towns this is embodied in the oil festival (in other cases it is the harvest, saffron or orchard festival, among many others), where the public don the typical uniforms we have described and recreate the "traditional" work of harvesting the olive grove while they wait for speeches by local, provincial and/or regional dignitaries, before participating in a tasting of the local product, the typical bread and oil, the basis of the Mediterranean diet that we will talk about later. These community exaltations, in the most Durkheimian sense of the term, lead to the creation of strong bonds of solidarity among the members of the community, which, beyond the institutional airs and graces, penetrate the social fabric, amplified through social networks, and acquire their own characteristics and a broad symbolic sense of belonging.

The role of public authorities is further reinforced through the deliberate entanglement of local festivals with educational institutions. Here, as part of the younger generations' learning experience, they participate in this ritual and become the protagonists by wearing the typical costumes, a source of pride for parents and grandparents, thus internalising the discourse and, thanks to custom, acquiring a set of uses and values that only existed during the harshest decades of the Franco dictatorship. Here it would be interesting to highlight how this imaginary operates in a feedback loop, because when it comes to disseminating news associated with olive trees, regardless of the topic covered, the archetypal image of the shakers in the olive trees is omnipresent, even though today this figure is merely testimonial. If newspaper archives are used to provide documentary support, then the situation is redundant. However, these actions are not only limited to these festivities; this intertwining exists in many more events, from holding town festivals, establishing connections with the social and cultural fabric, such as through football—the *frente aceitunero* ("olive tree front") ultra group of FC Jaén—or leisure spaces, such as Olivo Arena, a municipal sports arena in Jaén. This aims to, and in fact does achieve, establish a shared identity between the essence of Jaén in the broadest sense and the olive grove, which makes everyone from Jaén experts in olive growing. This also has to do with another institutional development that supports the industry, which is the sale of the product—olive oil—and *mar-*

keting around the product, in addition to the support of the academy, which has played a fundamental role in history, establishing a linear continuity between the Roman mills, passing through the Arabs and continuing to the present day, all based around the thousand-year-old olive trees, together with the "virtues" of olive oil that make it a kind of Fierabras potion against all evils—perhaps it is!—that seeks to distinguish itself based on price rather than quality (López-Miranda *et al.*, 2018).

To this day, the link between the province and the olive tree and its oil is firmly rooted among the general public and the institutions, becoming an identifying symbol of the province, something that sets it apart and turning all inhabitants into bearers of the values of rusticity, an updated version of the family-friendly comedies used as a kind of Andalusian propaganda during the Franco regime (such as *Vente para Alemania Pepe* and *El abuelo tiene un plan* by Pedro Lazaga; *Los días de Cabirio*, by Fernando Merino; and *El calzonazos* by Mariano Ozores), which depicted small town-living as being the most authentic way. If under Francoism the enemy was the "evils" and dangers of the city, today it is the complexities of post-modern societies and the unaffordable development of communication technologies. Social media is where these supposed differences are most apparent. In addition to using it to spread the word about different festivities and events, it is a place where these local differences—which are much more than signs of identity and not just the subject of banter—become differentiating features, resulting in people sharing common places, archetypes and/or prejudices, and where the risks that such discrimination entails rear their heads.

This new form of costumbrismo is not unique to the province of Jaén; rather, it reflects a broader phenomenon observable throughout Spain. It may, in part, be understood as a response to the internal fractures within Spanish nationalism —a way of negotiating the uneven expansion and institutionalisation of certain cultural forms over others. Regional standardisation often coalesces around symbols that are not universally embraced, even when superficially assumed. For instance, it is commonly presumed that all Andalusians accept the cultural hegemony of Seville, or that all Aragonese are fervent participants in the San Fermín festival. These emblematic forms become perceived as models of success, rendering them adaptable and exportable across contexts. What is particularly striking in the case of Jaén is its capacity to construct a distinct cultural model —one that, while shaped by shared national dynamics, asserts its singularity. Despite the similarities between Jaén and other provinces to which its diaspora has migrated, the impulse appears to be less about actual difference than about strategically emphasising it. In this sense, the fabrication of cultural distinction serves to legitimise specific policies and actors eager to consolidate political power.

5. In conclusion. The future is profitability

At this point it is necessary to take into account the post-industrial characteristics referred to at the beginning that have started being introduced into production, like the flexibilisation of the market and the ensuing flexibilisation of production, since areas such as North Africa have emerged as important players in the game tradition-

ally dominated by Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, thus offering the transnationals that rules the market to diversify. This is especially the case with olive oil, where countries like Tunisia are "lurking" in the background, and countries including Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Australia have all begun producing olive oil. Another characteristic that merits discussion is the trend towards mechanisation in the collection and processing of the product, the disinvestment in labour and the *essentialisation* of the product by local development policies, linked to the use of identity and intangible heritage as something to be valued, either through organic production or designations of origin. However, these characteristics can be seen to a greater extent in the case of Jaén and against the backdrop of its role in Europe. Therefore, one cannot fail to get the impression that in the case of Jaén, we are looking at a technocratic late-modern exercise with a simulation of tradition that is pushing against the idea of progress being imposed from "outside". The contrasts observed across the various socio-economic spaces of Jaén are particularly revealing, especially regarding the blurred boundary between formal and informal practices. A key structural paradox lies in the coexistence of informality with its ostensible opposite: the hyperformalised figure of the *oil corridor* (corredor del aceite), emblematic of Jaén's olive economy. This figure encapsulates the intersection of traditional brokerage roles with contemporary market rationalities —embodied in mechanisms such as oil futures trading and intra-cooperative power struggles. The conceptual arbitrariness of these formal-informal distinctions becomes evident when one considers the contingency underlying their very delimitation.

If we strip the olive business down to its bare bones as a commercial innovation, where few people obtain wide profit margins, there is a popular sentimental vision linked to the independence that the crop gives, independence around the edges and at the margins, in addition to a strong territorial and sentimental link to the olive grove, which leads to an identification, based on the traditional system of inheritance, with the properties and estates and in many cases with the trees themselves, although this identification is deferred to the fluctuations of economic needs and profitability, as the economic rationality of profitability prevails in most people. A special facet of this sentimentality is represented by the reluctance of immigrants to get rid of inherited plots, to maintain their ties to their origins, something which is only broken by subsequent generations. Something similar happens with the product, with the olive oil. The consumption of oil from the place of origin continues, and if the olive groves are maintained, we encounter the pipe dream of imagining that we are consuming oil from the olive grove itself. This imaginary consumption of oil from one's own olive trees offers another twist on the olive oil business, with mini mills that transform the olive, thus guaranteeing its provenance, into yet another chapter of refining it for consumption. Regarding the product, another thing is the tree itself which, like the product, becomes another symbol of distinction and status with the acquisition of old olive trees as a decorative element in public and private gardens. Beyond the so-called conservationism and the other attachments there are—and there are plenty of them, with the film *The Olive Tree* by Icíar Bollaín serving as just one example—the reality is that it is a traditional practice, one that persists to this day, to replace the old olive trees and/or those of less productive varieties with ones

that are more profitable. It is usually preferred to sell them as firewood or to sell more profitable live olive trees, but when priority is given to the economic aspect, the olive tree always ends up being cut down.

We are well aware that the world of olive cultivation is multifaceted, with many of its edges difficult to smooth or reconcile. Nonetheless, the purpose of this article is to reignite debates that appear to have reached an impasse —an inertia that stands in stark contrast to the ongoing innovation taking place within the sector. As in broader society, it seems that what remains stable belongs to the realm of culture, while what is subject to constant transformation falls within the domain of technological or economic innovation, often aimed at extracting greater profits and inflating the value of specific assets. The rest of us are offered an idealised universe of happiness and abundance, which is very reminiscent of the imaginaries we read in stories. In reality, the olive grove is a historical consequence of the globalisation of markets, of the conditions implemented by the political and economic elite, of the instructions of agronomic science applied in each context to help maximise profits, and without considering other marginal alternatives (Lozano, 2011), with a clear stratification of power structures and no consideration of social and environmental costs until very recent times.

6. References

Anderson, B. (2005). *Comunidades Imaginadas. Reflexiones sobre el origen y difusión del nacionalismo.* México: FCE.

Anta, J.-L. and Palacios, J. (Eds.) (2002). *La cultura del aceite en Andalucía.* Sevilla: Fundación Machado.

Araque, E. (1993). El declive de los montes públicos giennenses durante el siglo XIX. Una aproximación introductoria. *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Giennenses,* 150. https://doi.org/10.14198/INGEO2002.28.03

Araque Jiménez, E., Gallego, V. J. and Sánchez Martínez, J. D. (2002). El olivar regado en la provincia de Jaén. *Investigaciones geográficas*, 28, 5-32. https://doi.org/10.14198/INGEO2002.28.03

Bernal Rodríguez, A. M. (1974). *La propiedad de la tierra y las luchas agrarias andaluzas.* Barcelona: Ariel.

Bernal Rodríguez, A. M. (1979). *La lucha por la tierra en la crisis del Antiguo Régimen.* Madrid: Taurus.

Blas, J. (2022). *El mundo está en venta. La cara oculta de las materias primas.* Barcelona: Península.

Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Razones prácticas. Sobre la teoría de la acción.* Barcelona: Anagrama.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *La distinción. Criterio y bases sociales del gusto.* Madrid: Taurus.

Bruder, J. (2020). *País nómada. Supervivientes del siglo XXI.* Barcelona: Capitán Swing.

Consejería de Agricultura, Pesca y Desarrollo Rural (2021). *Informe anual de la campaña de aceite de oliva.* https://ws128.juntadeandalucia.es/agriculturaypesca/observatorio/servlet/FrontController?ec=default&action=DownloadS&table=11030&element=3872364&field=DOCUMENTO

Consejería de Agricultura, Pesca, Agua y Desarrollo Rural (2022). *Macromagnitudes agrarias de Andalucía y provincias.* https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/sites/default/files/inline-files/2023/05/1_Estimaci%C3%B3n%20Renta%20Agraria2022_Mayo_2023.pdf

Coriat, B. (2000). *El taller y el robot. Ensayos sobre el fordismo y la producción en masa en la era de la electrónica.* México: Siglo XXI.

Costa, J. (1981). *Derecho consuetudinario y economía popular de España.* Zaragoza: Guara.

Cuesta Aguilar, M. J., Menor Toribio, J. A. and García Martínez, P. (1998). La reforma de la Organización Común de Mercado (OCM) del aceite de oliva. *Cuadernos geográficos de la Universidad de Granada,* 28, 281-288.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1988). *Mil mesetas.* Valencia: Pre-textos.

Durkheim, É. (2012). *Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa.* México: FCE.

Elias, N. (1990). *Compromiso y distanciamiento.* Barcelona: Península.

Etxezarreta, M. (Coord.) (2006). *La agricultura española en la era de la globalización.* Madrid: MAPA.

Gallego, V. J. (2013). *El Plan Jaén de 1953 y sus antecedentes. Una oportunidad perdida para el desarrollo de la provincia de Jaén en el siglo XX.* Jaén: Universidad de Jaén.

Gallego, V. J. (2014). *Colonización, regadíos y desarrollo en el sur de España: el caso particular de la provincia de Jaén.* Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente.

Gallego, V. J. and Sánchez Martínez, J. D. (2013). El papel de la Diputación provincial en el diagnóstico y remedio de la problemática económica y social jiennense (1925-1953). *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Giennenses*, 207, 507-546.

Garrabou, R. (1990). Sobre el atraso de la mecanización agraria en España (1850-1933). *Agricultura y sociedad*, 57, 41-78.

Graeber, D. (2018). *Trabajos de mierda. Una teoría.* Barcelona: Ariel.

INE (2023). *Cifras oficiales de población de los municipios españoles.* En https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176951&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735572981

Infante-Amate, J. (2012). «Cuántos siglos de aceituna». El carácter de la expansión olivarera en el sur de España (1750-1900). *Historia Agraria*, 58, 39-72.

Juliá, Santos (1989). *Historia social/sociología histórica.* Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Krugman, P. and Wells, R. (2016). *Macroeconomía.* Barcelona: Reverte.

Lacour, C. (1996). La tectonique des territoires: d´une métaphore a une théorisation. In B. Pecqueur (Ed.), *Dynamiques territoriales et mutations* économiques (pp. 25–48). Paris: L´Harmattan.

López Ontiveros, A. (1978). *El sector oleícola y el olivar: oligopolio y coste de recolección*. Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura.

López-Miranda, J., Pérez-Jiménez, F., Ros, E. *et al.* (2018). Olive oil and health: Summary of the II international conference on olive oil and health consensus report, Jaén and Córdoba (Spain). *Nutrients*, *10*(9), 11–55.

Lozano Cabedo, C. (2011). *El sabor de la naturaleza: agricultura ecológica en parques naturales andaluces*. Sevilla: Fundación Blas Infante.

Martín Rodríguez, M. (2017). ENIRA y el Plan Nacional de Aprovechamiento de Residuos Agrícolas de 1952. Historia de un Fracaso. *Revista de historia industrial*, 9, 117–149. https://doi.org/10.1344/rhi.v0i9.18351.

Menor Toribio, J. (2007). *Atlas demográfico y social de la provincia de Jaén.* Jaén: Mergablum.

Observatorio de precios y mercados (2022). *Informe final de campaña del sector aceite de oliva en Andalucía. Campaña 2021/22.* https://ws128.juntadeandalucia.es/agriculturaypesca/observatorio/servlet/FrontController?action=DownloadS&table=11030&element=4257802&field=DOCUMENTO

Palacios, J. (2007). *Capitalismo, globalidad y ecología cultural. Hacia una economía política de la mundialización.* Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Palerm Viqueira, J. V. (1999). Las nuevas comunidades mexicanas en los espacios rurales de los Estados Unidos de América: a propósito de una reflexión acerca del quehacer antropológico. *Áreas. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 19, 154–180.

Pérez Galdós, B. (2004). *Miau.* Madrid: Cátedra.

Pinto, A. and Castro, N. (2023). *Abramos las cancelas. La lucha de las jornaleras de Huelva por otros modelos de agricultura.* Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.

Polanyi, K. (1989). *La gran transformación.* Madrid: La Piqueta.

Quesada, T. (1989). *El libro de Vecindades de Huelma: introducción y edición.* Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Sánchez Martínez, J. D., Rodríguez Cohard, J. C., Gallego Simón, V. J. and Garrido Almonacid, A. (2022). El avance de las plantaciones olivareras súper intensivas en el valle del Guadalquivir: panorama y prospectiva. *Estudios de economía aplicada*, *40*, (2). https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v40i2.7300

Sevilla Guzmán, E. (1979). *La evolución del campesinado en España. Elementos para una sociología histórica.* Barcelona: Península.

Tomás y Valiente, F. (1972). *El marco político de la desamortización en España.* Barcelona: Ariel.

Tomás y Valiente, F., Donézar, J., Rueda, G. and Moro, M. (1985). *La Desamortización*. Madrid: Cuadernos de Historia 16.

Vicens Vives, J. (1969). *Manual de historia económica de España*. Barcelona: Vicens Universidad.

Wallerstein, I. (1989). *El moderno sistema mundial*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Weber, Max (1984). *La ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*. Barcelona: SARPE.

Zambrana Pineda, J. F. (1987). *Crisis y modernización del olivar español, 1870-1930*. Madrid: MAPA.

Links:

Town council of Martos (Jaén), consulted on 20-6-2024. https://martos.es/festejos/fiestas-de-la-aceituna/

ElEconomista.es, consulted on 18-6-2024. https://ranking-empresas.eleconomista.es/sector-1043.html

Royal Legislative Decree 1/2010, of July 2, approving the revised text of Capital Companies Act. (Ley de Sociedades de Capital). *BOE*, No. 161, of July 3, 2010.

Law 22/2015, of July 20, on Auditing. *BOE*, No. 173, July 21, 2015.

Juan Sergio Quesada-Aguilar

Interim substitute professor at the University of Jaén. He holds a PhD in heritage from the University of Jaén, a bachelor's degree in sociology and political science and administration from the National University of Distance Education and a bachelor's degree in contemporary history from the University of Granada. He has held various positions and roles in local administrations, including secretary-comptroller, employment and local development agent, local promotion and employment agent, documentary technician, land registry management technician and area archivist.

José-Luis Anta-Félez

He holds a PhD in social anthropology from the Complutense University of Madrid and is a professor at the University of Jaén. He is vice-dean of the Faculty of Social Work and a member of the EU Decolonial Cost Action. He has been a visiting professor at universities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico, France and the USA, among others. He has carried out fieldwork in different autonomous communities in Spain and Latin America and currently works on issues related to ethnography, epistemology and gender. Among his latest books are *Segmenta antropológica*, *Fiesta, trabajo y creencia*, *La performatividad, el laboratorio y el arte*, *Crítica de la razón universitaria* and *Coches, aviones y mochilas*.

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

The Impact of RICTs on Coexistence in Andalusian Families: Challenges and Opportunities

El impacto de las TRIC en la convivencia
en las familias andaluzas: desafíos y oportunidades

Anna Sanmartín Ortí
Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud, Spain
asanmartín@fad.es

Stribor Kuric
Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud, Spain
skuric@fad.es

Christian Orgaz
Indaga, Cooperativa de Investigación, Formación e Intervención Sociológica, Spain
orgaz@indaga.org

Manuel Blanco Campos
Indaga, Cooperativa de Investigación, Formación e Intervención Sociológica, Spain
manuel.blanco@indaga.org

ABSTRACT

The use of ICRTs (Information, Communication and Relationship Technologies) is one of the elements causing the most significant intergenerational conflict within family relationships, posing a huge challenge for cohabitation. Through qualitative methodology, we analyze the different perceptions and uses that the Andalusian adolescent population have in their digital socialization and practices and we compare it to the habits and ideas held by their parents. By identifying common points and differential logics related to the advantages and opportunities of the digital ecosystem, as well as various risks and challenges, the aim of the analysis is to define agreed strategies to achieve safe and high-quality digital mediation in the homes.

HOW TO REFERENCE: Sanmartín Ortí, A., Kuric, S., Orgaz, C. and Blanco Campos, M. (2025). El impacto de las TRIC en la convivencia en las familias andaluzas: desafíos y oportunidades. *Revista Centra de Ciencias Sociales, 4*(1), 59-81. https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.96

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.96

RESUMEN

El uso de las TRIC (Tecnologías de la Relación, la Información y la Comunicación) es uno de los elementos que mayor conflictividad intergeneracional está produciendo en el seno familiar, erigiéndose en un enorme desafío para la convivencia. Con el fin de abordar ese desafío, analizamos mediante metodología cualitativa las diferentes percepciones y usos que realiza la población adolescente andaluza en su socialización y prácticas digitales frente a los hábitos e ideas que sostienen sus progenitores. Se han implementado seis técnicas conversacionales grupales, tres con adolescentes y tres con progenitores. La categorización de los discursos registrados ha permitido identificar las principales divergencias entre el imaginario juvenil y el adulto y las estrategias que han facilitado una mediación digital segura y de calidad en los hogares.

KEYWORDS: RICTs; families; adolescents; conflicts; digital mediation; ubiquity; reconnection.

1. Introduction

Nowadays we live in a hyper-connected, multimedia[1] world in which digital technologies, which have penetrated Spanish society and whose use has intensified in recent years, have become increasingly ubiquitous in our social interactions and practices. As a result, digital technologies now play a fundamental role in modern socialisation processes (Spanish Institute for Youth [INJUVE], 2021). In 2023, almost all Spanish households had an Internet connection (96.4%, while in the previous decade the percentage stood at around 62%), and 95.4% of Spaniards aged between 16 and 74 were Internet users—considered to have used the Internet in the last three months— with 90% doing so daily. In addition, the use of devices has increased: the data show that 82.6% of the population has some type of computer and 99.5% a mobile phone (Spanish National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2023). This translates into a rise in Internet access and an increased availability and use of technological devices. However, this leads to more intense digital activity: eight out of ten people browse the web several times a day and around nine out of ten do so using a *smartphone* (Statistical Office of the European Union [Eurostat], 2021). If we break this trend down by age group, practically all under-35s are Internet users and own a mobile phone (INE, 2023).

Mobile phones are the most widely used device by youths for digital connectivity, making them a multifaceted and multifunctional "Swiss Army knife" (Calderón, 2021) through which more and more daily activities are carried out (accessing information, communicating; commercial, consumer and administrative activities; leisure and entertainment, etc.). Given this social and technological convergence, mobile phones play a pivotal role in youth socialisation processes (Lasén and Casado, 2014). Another of the distinctive features of the

ways younger generations socialise using digital means is the multimedia and diversified nature of their digital connectivity, since they use a wide range of devices—such as *smartphones*, computers, *tablets*, video game consoles, *smart TVs* and *wearables*, among others—to maintain contact and interact with their social environment and to expand the possibilities of the physical world around them, not forgetting leisure and entertainment purposes. As such, around three quarters of this age group have more than four technological devices and 29.2% have more than seven, with computers, especially laptops (79.8%), being most common, although an impressive variety of other devices is also used (Calderón-Gómez and Gómez-Miguel, 2022). These data show how young people in Spain, regardless of their social, cultural or economic capital, participate in digital culture and sociability and construct their social lives through digital technologies (devices, platforms, apps, social media, etc.).

In any case, it is worth highlighting the existence of a digital divide as regards access to devices, the development of skills linked to the use of these devices and the *offline* enjoyment of the benefits provided by digital technologies, with the most vulnerable populations being particularly affected (Calderón *et al.*, 2022). Digital divides not only impact skills development, but they also increase exposure to the possible risks associated with the *online* environment (Livingstone and Helsper, 2009). Despite this, the connectivity provided by digital technologies and the Internet has a profound, cross-cutting impact on our lives, with employment, education, communication and leisure practices all being made possible thanks to the myriad RICT devices that are connected to the enormous multimedia repository that is the Internet. This digitisation of social life transforms the way in which reality, identity, the body and lifestyle are understood and experienced, as well as the ways in which we interact with one another (Bucher and Helmond, 2017; Hernández, 2022). Although the use of digital technologies in everyday activities has enormous potential, the literature also identifies possible problematic behaviours in their use (Gordo *et al.*, 2018):

· Personal hyper-exposure: constant and uncritical display of personal life.
· Hyper-self-quantification: the meticulous and excessive measurement of one's behaviour through self-tracking practices or automated, systematic and chronological recording.
· Over-identification: the attachment to certain digital devices that results in the strict uncritical use of specific devices or platforms as a way of constructing one's own identity.
· Predominance of evasive use: identified when evasive use, which is very common, clearly exceeds the other types of uses, which can give rise to problematic behaviours that make us renounce daily activities that, were it not for this evasive use, we would have carried out normally.
· Isolation of digital environments: an absolute isolation of digital networks and technologies, which can work to the detriment of money-ownership structures.

Taking these elements into account, the presence of screens and devices in homes and in everyday life has obvious effects on family relationships, as not only do they create spaces in which their members can come together and communicate, but they also cause tension and disagreements between the diverging habits of adults and adolescents. The family institution has a fundamental role in socialisation, in which education around technology is increasingly relevant (Martín-Perpiñá *et al.*, 2019), both in terms of forms of control and formal education and in its use for entertainment and leisure activities. Faced with this ever-changing context, digital mediation is no easy task (Bran *et al.*, 2016), and given the ubiquity of screens in domestic and public spaces, it is tough to establish and enforce limits on their use (Carrasco *et al.*, 2017). In fact, adults too are exposed to a good part of the problems that their children experience (Megías *et al.*, 2022). And, thanks to funding from the Andalusian Studies Centre as part of its 12th call for research projects, this is precisely what we intend to focus on in this article, which will explore the uses and perceptions of RICTs (relationship, information and communication technologies) in the family environment and examine their impact on peaceful coexistence in the home.

2. State of the matter: tensions in the home arising from screen use

Previous studies carried out by the Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud have demonstrated that the use of the Internet, social media and electronic devices is one of the main points of contention and produces the most intergenerational conflict within the family. Some examples of this kind of conflict can be seen when parents try to manage quality family time without technological devices and when they request that their children tell them where they are and when they are coming home when they are out (Megías *et al.*, 2022). The data show that the use of technology is a common theme and tends to lead to tension and misunderstandings within households. Parents of adolescent children are witnessing a generation that is experiencing changes at an accelerated rate, and in this relationship we can find cyber-utopian discourses that idealise the digital skills and abilities of young people, as well as perspectives that highlight the risks and problematic uses of technologies, with an emphasis on overexposure, the importance of personal image in interactions on social media and even screen addiction. Both parties agree that the Internet offers adolescents a greater diversity of resources, but also from different perspectives, so concern for privacy and *online* exposure is a key issue for parents. And this concern is amplified as a result of the generation gap, with adults fearing that they will lose control given the greatly increased time the younger generations spend using devices and the higher level of digital competence they perceive them to have.

Figure 1

Degree of agreement with statements about the use of RICTs by adolescents (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,803)
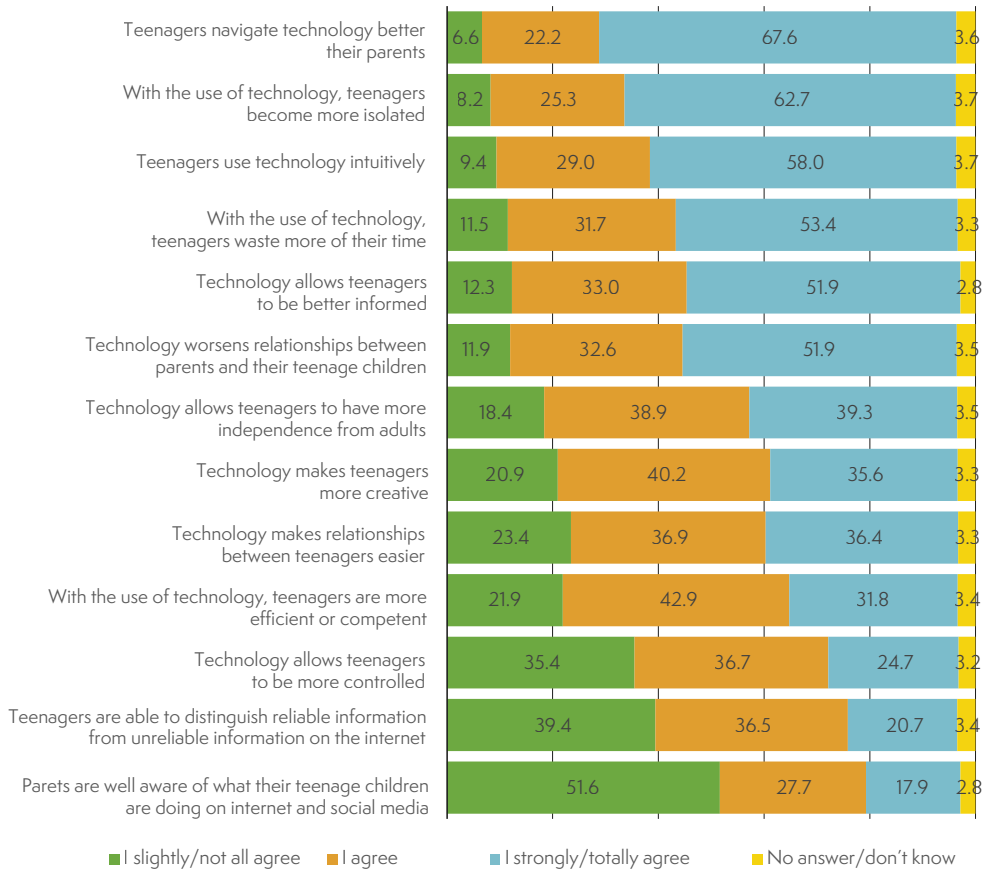
Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

The data presented in Figure 1 show that adolescence tends to be associated with high levels of digital skills, with high agreement on the statements that they "perform better than their parents" (67.6% agree) and "use technology intuitively" (58% agree). However, they also reveal fears about technology use, such as adolescents have a "tendency to isolate themselves" (62.7% agree), that they "waste their time" (53.4% agree) and that "family relationships worsen" (51.9% agree). They also express a feeling of inability to control adolescents' use of these technologies, along with a number of other responses that recorded a lower degree of agreement.

On the other hand, the adolescent population is generally perceived as having good digital skills, superior to those of both their parents and teachers. When asked about five specific skills that anyone who uses the Internet and social media must have

(information searching, communication, safety, problem identification and resolu-tion, and content creation), the perception is that the younger generations generally possess high or medium–high levels of these skills. And in turn, the latter do not view their elders as being equally adept in technological matters: when asked who they turn to when requiring help solving a problem with a technological device or the Internet, they mainly ask their friends (27.5%) and to a much lesser degree their part-ner (18.9%), parents (14.1%), siblings (12.8%), other relatives (12.4%), other peo-ple (10.1%) and teachers (8.5%). On the other hand, 18.9% say that they solve these problems on their own, without having to ask anyone for help, and 13.8% claim to have not encountered any issues with which they require assistance (Megías, 2024).

The family is losing its status as a hub for life and socialisation as peer groups contin-ue to grow in importance for their children and adolescents demand more and more autonomy, something that always requires readjustment and negotiation within the family. One of the main sources of conflict for parents is the use of technology, as we can see in Figure 2: for 47.7% of parents, the use of social media, the Internet and technology is far and away the number one reason for disagreements at home, with a huge gap compared to other issues such as alcohol consumption (38%) and academic performance (30%) (Megías *et al.*, 2022).

Figure 2

Main reasons for disagreements in families with adolescents (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,803)

Reason	%
The use of technology, the internet and social networks	47.7%
Consumption of alcohol or other substances	38.9%
Studies	30.7%
Relationships with parents	22.7%
Money	21.5%
The times of arriving home at night	21.1%
Friendships	20.7%
La colaboración con el trabajo doméstico	20.6%
Collaboration with housework	14.6%
Sexual relations	10.9%
The way of making decisions in the family	10.5%
Relationships with brothers and sisters	5.8%
Religious or political ideas	3.8%
DK/NA	1.6%
None	0.7%

Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

Now that technology use has been identified as the main cause of family disagreement for parents, a final piece of data, in this case the responses of adolescents and young people (Megías, 2024), invites us to reflect on the type of technological involvement that adults have with their children.

Figure 3

People who show interest in or talk about what adolescents do on the Internet (last year) (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,510)

Friendships 40.5

Parents 29.9

Teachers 13.4

He doesn't talk to anyone about what he does on internet 32.7
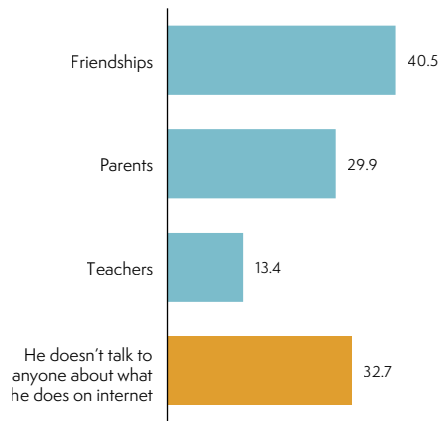
Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

Figure 4

People they talk to about cybersecurity or online behaviour (last year) (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,510)

Friendships 30.7

Parents 22.6

Teachers 17.5

He doesn't talk to anyone about what he does on internet 40.3
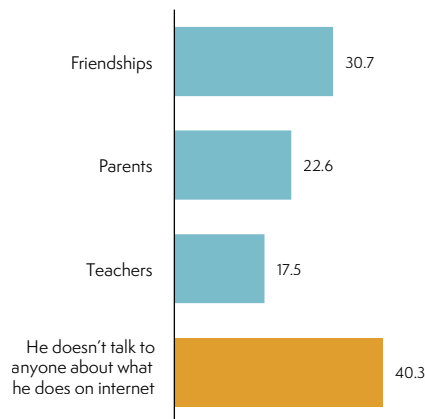
Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

Figure 3 shows that a third of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 do not talk to anyone about what they do on the Internet (32.7%), while Figure 4 suggests that over 40% have not received advice from anyone in their surroundings on how to increase their safety or on how they should behave while on the Internet. For youngsters, their peer group is their primary source of information and support regarding *online* behaviour, with their parents coming in second place. The data reveal that only 30% of parents show an interest in their children's *online* activity, and only 22.6% of the latter say that they talk to their parents about cybersecurity or their *online* behaviour. As such, it is evident that there are important shortcomings in the way families communicate regarding the use of digital technologies.

3. Objectives

The main goal of this research project is to analyse the perceptions and uses of digital technologies in family settings in Andalusia in order to promote safe and consensual use of the Internet in homes.

This, in turn, is broken down into the following specific objectives:

- Delve into the experiences and perceptions of adolescents and of adults with adolescent children regarding digital technology use.
- Examine the main differences and commonalities between adolescents and adults in terms of their use of digital technologies and the perception of the risks associated with them.
- Analyse the ways in which conflicts, tensions and problems that occur within families are exacerbated and/or caused by technology use.
- Highlight the main requirements of adolescents and adults in terms of strategies, challenges and opportunities generated by digital technologies in family interactions.

4. Methodology

Our methodological approach comprises two techniques. First, we performed a review of the literature and secondary sources, which allowed us to contextualise the theoretical framework in which the research has been carried out and this article has been written. Second, we undertook a qualitative analysis of two types of group dynamics.

This qualitative approach allows us to capture a narrative by using conversational techniques that bring to light the emerging discourses around the topics addressed (Alonso, 1998). We use two types of group dynamic: discussion groups and core groups. The discussion groups followed a mostly well-defined structure (Colectivo

IOE, 2010) that gives us access to generalised social representations of a given phe-nomenon. It is a consensual process that aims to (re)construct the crystallised dis-course of a social group and capture a collective identity (Callejo, 2001). Core groups have been created specifically for this project (Orgaz, 2025) by combining aspects of Conde's (2009) triangular group and the discussion group (Ibáñez, 1979). They are made up of four to five members and emulate the dynamics of the discussion and triangular groups, providing a semi-guided and agile setting in which to explore the emergence of representations while facilitating moments with little interven-tion that explore the crystallisation of these representations. The name "core group" comes from the fact that it is not a triad, like the triangular group, nor a defined grouping, like the discussion group, but rather the smallest viable group size. This group is designed to capture discourses that, although no longer emerging, are still crystallising within society.

As can be seen in Figure 5, two mixed discussion groups—one for parents and one for adolescents living in Seville and Granada—and four non-mixed core groups (two for parents and two for adolescents) were set up. The fieldwork was carried out between May and June 2023. All the groups used the same semi-structured script addressing the main themes set out in the objectives (digital skills, uses and perception of risk, conflict perception and management, requirements and ideal models).

Figure 5

Graph showing the qualitative sampling. Discussion groups (DG) and core groups (CG) by age and gender
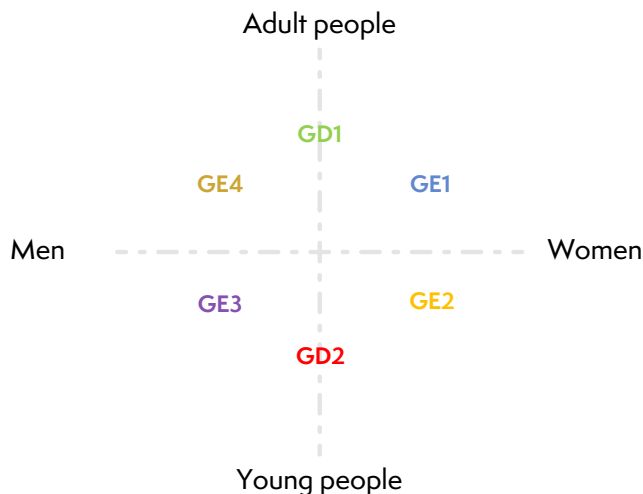
Source: own research.

A number of variables were taken into account when selecting the participants: gender, age, children's age (for parents), family living situation, place of habitual residence (eastern or western Andalusia) and intensity of use of social media. All participants self-identified as middle-class, and not as poor lower-class nor upper-middle- or upper-class. It should be noted that the selected individuals do not share households. We chose to prioritise generalised groups, given that we do not have enough groups to be able to perform an in-depth analysis of the discursive diversity around social class, educational attainment, rurality and family models.

The chosen parents are all aged between 40 and 55, live with children aged between the ages of 15 and 25 and use technology either moderately (instant messaging and content platforms such as YouTube or Netflix, but do not use social media on a daily basis) or intensively (daily use of social media as well as *streaming* platforms, *online* video games, etc.).

The groups of adolescents, aged between 15 and 18, were selected taking into account the fact that they live with parents or legal guardians aged between 40 and 55 and that they too use technology either moderately or intensively.

The group sessions, which lasted between one and a half and two hours, were recorded in a digital audio format and subsequently transcribed and anonymised, with the interviews being coded for thematic analysis using the computer *program* Atlas.ti. Next, a "socio-hermeneutic analysis" was carried out (Alonso, 1998), focusing on the main topics addressed. The work of Lanigan (2009) and his "sociotechnological family model" was used as a reference when analysing the use of digital technologies within families. This model highlights the need for a holistic approach to understanding how technologies, individual traits, family factors and external influences such as access to certain devices jointly shape the management of technology use. The way parents and their children perceive and use technologies individually directly affects digital parenting strategies.

This qualitative approach allows us to discover social representations regarding technology, family relationships and the relationship between the two, taking into account both the most well-established imaginaries and discourses and those that are still taking shape and being constructed. As there is a small number of groups, the variables taken into account when forming them are limited and the resulting data are therefore exploratory.

5. Results

Following analysis of the resulting discourse from the discussion groups and the core groups we have been able to identify the main differences between the attitudes of adolescents and parents towards the use of digital technologies, with gender being one of the most conditioning variables. At the same time, we can perceive points of convergence regarding technological mediation that reveal a number of strategies for fostering a more harmonious family coexistence. Below we will explain each of these concepts in further detail.

5.1. Disputed legitimacies and logics

This qualitative approach highlights multiple nuances in the perceptions about technology use among adults and youngsters, about the perceived effect of its potentialities and advantages on daily life and about the risks and bad habits it involves. It also brings to the fore how different legitimacies and logics are disputed, fundamentally due to age and vastly distinct expectations regarding digital activity.

Parents share a discourse that highlights the logic of focus, which dictates that presence and attention can only be in one place and on one action at any given moment. They tend to concentrate on a task and stick to the ideal of staying away from distractions since multitasking generates discomfort. They create specific, limited spaces in their technology use, trying not to overlap one task with another, and strive to ensure that their *online* activity does not excessively interfere with their *offline* activity. In contrast, adolescents adopt the opposite logic: their technology use does not require a single, specific meaning, but instead seeks various objectives at one time, such as integration, presence, recognition and social prestige, entertainment, self-expression and self-knowledge. The logic of ubiquity prevails among the younger digital users studied, since technologies allow them to exist simultaneously in various spaces and times, making *everything possible everywhere and at the same time* (Lasen, 2020). According to this logic, young people are able to shift their attention based on their interests, both *online* and *offline*, without any significant or apparent problems.

As such, here we can see two different legitimacies, each with a different capacity and bargaining power, since in the dynamics described it is usually the parents who try to impose their logic on their children when deciding which technology uses are appropriate.

As demonstrated by the discourses, for parents, their adolescent children's ways of being present and connected conflict with their own perceptions of which uses are appropriate, which, according to their criteria, would be those prescribed by the logic of focus. A good example of this tension occurs at family meal time, one of the main rites in the home and the protagonist of most device-related conflicts. The clash arises as a result of parents assuming that this moment, sitting around the table at meal time, is an opportunity for some quality time where family members can comment on their day or bring up, discuss and attempt to solve possible problems, and

these moments can be impeded by the use of technological devices. Here youngsters are asked to adhere to two different sets of rules: family demands, such as being required to sit down to dinner at a specific time, which clashes with what is expected of them by the youth world, which is to synchronise their social time with that of their peer group (start a game, follow a conversation thread, etc.).

> They'll say: "But we're all going online at 11 o'clock."

> "We have to have dinner early today because I have a tournament at eleven." And I say: "Ah, so the tournament is going to dictate what the whole family does? I'm going to say in the group that your tournament is the most important thing of the day." I mess with him, but I don't really pay him too much mind. "Mum, you just don't get it" (mixed parent group, Seville).

Therefore, in the adult groups there is a recurrent negative opinion of their children's digital activity. Various issues are mentioned, such as the loss of communication skills due to the use of very simplistic language (constant use of emojis, *stickers*, etc.) and the loss of spontaneity in interpersonal relationships as a result of being immersed in a digital world in which, the parents believe, appearance is all that matters. The feeling of isolation is also a concern, which is why parents encourage their children to engage in activities outside the home.

> Now I want her to go swimming, camping or just outside, anything but lying on the sofa. She spends all morning on holidays lying on the sofa with her mobile phone. So I tell her: "No, you can go anywhere you want: the pool, the public pool, the beach. You can go wherever you want, but just get out of the house!"

> We used to be to scared for them to leave the house. Nowadays we're afraid of them staying at home (group of mothers, Granada).

There are significant differences between the perspectives of fathers and mothers[2]. Fathers underline the importance of technology as a tool for acquiring knowledge and training and generally dismiss the recreational and social uses of RICTs. For them, who believe that the Internet is a tool for looking for something specific, the idea of consuming content without a purpose is inconceivable. In addition, they tend to hold more pessimistic and critical views, emphasising concerns about the possible risks associated with or derived from technology, exemplifying an already classic opinion of technology that lies somewhere between "apocalyptic" and "integrated"[3]. The discourses of the fathers refer to a widespread sense of loss of control when faced with technology and the difficulty they have restricting and limiting their children's use of it.

> He always gets his way. I don't know how I'm supposed to manage it. It's what we were talking about before, he gets his way. He knows… I tell him off, I punish him, whatever. But in the end he gets what he wants. How can I stop him? (group of fathers, Seville).

> But the boy spends most of the day watching videos on YouTube. Listening to podcasts.
>
> That's where he gets all his information from.
>
> Why does he get his information from there? Why does he follow all these YouTubers?
>
> Following YouTubers...
>
> That's not real information. It's just learning how to get better at playing a video game... (mixed parent group, Seville).

Mothers, on the other hand, adopt a more integrated position and stress the advantages of technology use and how it makes it easier for them to care for their family; for them, technology-mediated care is vital to them managing their parental responsibilities. What's more, and in contrast to the fathers, they show a greater willingness to explore the recreational dimension of RICTs, proving to be remarkably versatile in the way they interact with these technologies: they don't emphasise the dichotomy of loss or gain of time and they tend to use technology more naturally for the purpose of escape and entertainment, even though, unlike the adolescent population, their recreational moments are very limited in time and are restricted to the free time they have left once they have completed all their other duties.

> What I like about mobile phones is that they give me a sense of security that if anything happens to my daughter... (group of mothers, Granada).
>
> I have made TikToks with my friend and we couldn't stop laughing (group of mothers, Granada).

Young people, unlike adults, spend much less time forming opinions about adults' relationship with technology. Their parents come up in the conversations, of course, but more as interferences that try to impose themselves or modulate the children's use of technology. Their stories comment more on their own personal relationships with technology, such as their habits and routines, leading them to describe RICTs in terms of necessity: technology helps them complete everyday tasks and its absence would mean having to face insurmountable obstacles. Likewise, they talk about their digital profiles in biographical terms, since social media provides a detailed compilation of their lives, showing their milestones, places, reflections and the people around them, among other intimate details.

> Honestly, I think that if they took our phones away, we wouldn't know how to live without them.
>
> I do everything on my phone. Everything (group of boys, Seville).

> It's like an album of your entire life, all the different stages of your life, and it's like you have everything stored there (mixed group, Granada).

> Technology forms an intrinsic part of their interactions, their leisure and their relationship with their studies. You have to be available to be part of a peer group.

> But you also do it as a way to fit in. It's the same with social media; you use it to fit in, since everyone else has it, so you also have to have it.

> If not, you can't keep up with what's going on. You don't know what they're talking about when you see them. You simply have to use it,

> because if you don't you feel left out (mixed group, Granada).

They are, however, also aware of the risks, including possible screen addiction, but they tend to relativise the harmful or more serious impacts: they understand that, in the case of abusive use or possible addiction, the solution would not be to abandon their devices altogether, but rather to learn how to manage their bad habit. In fact, they advocate for flexible control over their relationship with technology.

> It is also a drug, but not one that has so much of an impact. It affects us in different situations, but it doesn't affect us as much.

> You can even learn things by watching TikToks and

> listening to podcasts.

> It's a great source of culture. But it's not a drug that you'll ever quit because there's no actual need to quit. I can see that I am hooked, but I don't need to give it up because it doesn't do much damage to me... (group of boys, Seville).

When confronting these bad habits, they refer to a series of more or less effective self-control strategies. Among them, they acknowledge that the presence of social relationships is what most effectively turns their attention away from technology, instead shifting the focus towards face-to-face social interactions. This does not imply a total separation from technology, but it does entail a substantial reduction in its use.

Therefore, the discourse of the youngsters reveals a certain ambivalence: on the one hand, they talk of a logic of freedom, made possible by the emancipatory nature of the new digital media, while on the other, they demonstrate an awareness of the dependence and saturation that is provoked by the use of digital technologies (Calderón-Gómez and Kuric, 2022). The Internet is seen as an open, flexible, accessible and democratic environment, and the need for and dependence on the use of technological tools to conduct all kinds of social practices is deduced. These tools not only allow access to information, they emphasise, but they also play a pivotal role

in social interactions and, in most cases, there is no equally beneficial *offline* coun-
terpart. However, this sometimes leads to a feeling of addiction. Digital technolo-
gies effectively have the potential to be liberating, facilitating people's lives in terms
of access to information, social interaction, entertainment and just about any other
type of daily activity, but they also make them dependent on the use of certain types
of technological devices, telecommunications services or information tools, which
not only tethers the subjects to the productive and consumption logics of the capi-
talist system, but also generates anxiety, stress and frustration as a result of having
to always keep up with the pace of social change.

5.2. Opportunities for coming together

Despite the tensions described and the different points of view expressed, we were
also able to identify a set of common views, possible meeting points and respons-
es to the interference that technologies may cause when it comes to finding quality
time to spend as a family, whether face-to-face or *online*, such as proposals aimed at
integration (friends or couples) into family circles, and others designed to promote
reconnection through shared technology use. These may be very useful when imple-
menting appropriate technology management measures in the home, which must be
proposed by the families themselves based on their own digital experiences.

In the first case, seeking to counteract the impact of technology on the possible im-
poverishment of their family relationships, young people and adults highlight the
benefits of integrating the children's friends or partner into household activities. The
result is a shared space in which technology is relegated to the background without
the need to veto it.

> I enjoy it more when my girlfriend comes over and we spend time with my parents.
> Because when I'm alone with my parents, whether you like my parents or not, and
> no matter how much trust I have with them to talk about what's going on with me
> or anything like that, when it comes to having fun... Well, we are different ages. […]
> And what happens is that my girlfriend also becomes part of the family
>
> and I'm not on my phone. Instead I'm listening to the conversation... It's kind of
> cool. You get excited (group of boys, Seville).

Regarding the reconnection strategy, the opportunity for shared technology use as
a family stands out, from watching television together to involving parents in other
technology uses that are more similar to those of their children, such as video games
or the social media they most use. These practices not only seek to provide a chance
to spend time together as a family, but they also involve adults in the digital universe
of the youth and nurture common interests.

> Watching a TV series together. Or, if the four of us are there, a film. I've also spent
> a lot of time with my father and brother watching films at home. "There's a great
> film on at 10 o'clock", and for all four of us to be there, or not. Just to talk about it.

And have a good laugh together.

Yes. Having dinner and watching [name of TV show]. Teasing people: "Look at what that guy is wearing", my father says...

Something outrageous, while my mother's there saying: "Come on, not in front of the children."

This is especially the case with TV series and stuff (group of boys, Seville).

Well, I am very interested in music and dance, so I can always interact with them about what interests me: "Download that song for me." Because if I don't, tell me what else we have in common if it's not: "What's for dinner?", "What time are you coming home?" and not much else. So, you have to look for... [...] But technologically speaking, you have to get with the programme, as she would say. If you get lost at that point, what do you have in common with them? Nothing (mixed parent group, Seville).

And, finally, we refer to scheduling face-to-face activities where there's no real need for technology, such as sharing experiences outdoors. Some examples are sports activities, whether playing sports or attending sporting events (which parents claim create genuine spaces without technological interference by their children), or organising family trips or outings that allow them to build intimacy and dialogue outside of technological means.

6. Discussion

The goal of this research project was to gain a more profound understanding of the use and perception of digital technologies by adolescents, and compare these with the practices and perceptions of parents of adolescent children in order to identify challenges and opportunities regarding family coexistence. We have investigated intergenerational divisions and tensions linked to the use of RICTs and attempted to define safe and quality uses revolving around the idea of digital accompaniment, in which the home represents a space where consensual, safe and critical digital practices can be enjoyed and shared.

The fieldwork has demonstrated that there are a number of different logics regarding technology in the home and the tensions it causes between adults and adolescents. In addition, it allowed us to hear what young people and parents have to say, how they express their discomfort, concerns and disagreements, and how they use a variety of elements to manage digital socialisation, something that they recognise as an inevitable part of modern life.

In general, adolescents view technology as a positive and essential part of their daily lives, although they are also cognisant of the risks it entails and acknowledge that

they are not always able to manage them. Despite the fact that the use of technologies is seen as an unquestionable necessity in the collective imagination, most young people also admit that, in the past year, they have felt saturated by or fed up with using the Internet or social media to the point of needing to "disconnect". In this regard, 30.1% claim to have felt like this quite frequently or very frequently, while 35.4% stated that they have felt this way at times (Megías, 2024). A great deal of technological dependence is socio-structural, deriving from an environment in which constant connectivity and total availability are expected of the subjects. It is not so much that the subjects have an individual addiction to technology use, but that the information environment in which they go about their daily lives ingrains in them a type of continuous and mobile connectivity, particularly so given the universal nature of smart phones. Faced with this scenario, the desire to disconnect is a common experience, especially at specific times and places where isolation is necessary to fully focus on the physically present world (Calderón-Gómez and Kuric, 2022). As a result, the idea of creating spaces for disconnection may be attractive for adults and young people alike, especially if these spaces also serve to deepen family ties.

Even though, as we have seen, the young population does not overly rely on their family members for help solving the problems they encounter in the digital realm, are generally able to teach themselves and, for the most part, believe themselves to possess outstanding digital skills, it is still essential that they receive education and guidance. Elements such as disinformation, overexposure, the saturation of content, online harassment and sexual violence, and access to harmful content and hate speech, among others, make training and development in terms of critical thinking and media and digital literacy vital (Eleuteri *et al.*, 2017; Megías, 2024; Megías *et al.*, 2020). The family continues to play a central role in guiding adolescent children during their immersion in the digital ecosystem for multiple reasons: to develop their own digital skills, to be able to amplify the advantages of RICTs, to prevent inappropriate use and to provide them with the resources to overcome possible risks. Just because children are considered "digital natives" does not eliminate the need for digital guidance because, despite being familiar with the devices and being digitally adept, their ability to assess and learn in the digital ecosystem requires direction and their autonomy must be acquired gradually and in a supervised manner.

It is worth mentioning that certain limitations were detected in the scope of the research. Firstly, the qualitative approach can make it difficult to generalise the results to the general population, since variables such as social class, educational attainment and habitat have not been taken into account. Therefore, the analysis does not consider socio-economic differences, education levels or differences between rural and urban areas when exploring the impact of digital technologies on family relationships. Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that the rapid evolution of technologies can affect the long-term relevance of the findings, given that digital practices and family dynamics are likely to change with the emergence of new platforms and devices. These limitations highlight the need for continued exploration of the issue with future methodological approaches that further refine our understanding of the impact that RICTs have on family coexistence.

Regardless, the results of the research underline the importance of and need to establish digital parenting models with which parents can guide their children and modulate their use of technologies. Strategies based on active and shared mediation in RICT use, technical restrictions, restrictions on the types of interactions and monitoring are some of the most widespread approaches that parents can adopt to mitigate the potential risks associated with Internet use. Past studies, such as Livingstone and Helpser (2008), reveal that the main way to reduce risk is by restricting interactions between users; however, these types of strategies come with a clear cost as they limit the benefits and potential opportunities of Internet use and can provoke intra-family conflict. Digital gaps have clear consequences on the range of strategies employed by parents, since those who perceive that their children have weaker digital skills tend to opt for a more restrictive approach. By doing so, they avoid more potential risks, but they also impact digital inclusion and cap the benefits of the opportunities presented by RICTs, thus reproducing these gaps (Livingstone *et al.*, 2017).

7. Conclusions

To conclude, the development of digital skills and the reduction of digital gaps are essential for ensuring a suitable digital intervention strategy. Aside from skills development, the results of the research point to further elements that could be crucial for facilitating this family involvement:

- Intergenerational parallels: there is an obvious common ground shared by the views of both adults and adolescents, so putting generational differences on the table would help establish a family dialogue about each member's individual relationship with technology with the goal of creating a link through shared experiences and finding a consensual way to address the tensions.

- Spaces for dialogue: it is important to seek and promote spaces where family members can engage in horizontal and respectful dialogue, empowering them to listen to and legitimise different views regarding needs and preferences in relation to technology in order to reach an agreement.

- Agreed limits: limits on technology use must be set (times, spaces, content, etc.) and these decisions respected. The purpose of the negotiations must be to agree on guidelines and limits that adults and young people alike consider as legitimate and tolerable.

- Consensus around threats (and search for solutions): both adults and adolescents identify digital threats and risks, and here children can play a key role in detecting them and training or guiding the adults in managing them. During the months-long lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw schools and workplaces close, we experienced the digital immersion of numer-

ous activities that had until then been carried out in person, and up to 72% of adolescents and young people declared that they had to provide social support to their family members in the use of RICTs (Sanmartín *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, this exchange and transmission of skills to parents and grandparents was key to overcoming barriers and difficulties.

· Gender perspective: studying the ways in which men and women, and adults and adolescents, face technologies is always necessary to detect different perceptions and habits, the different threats to which they are exposed, as well as strategies to overcome them and to meet the needs for care, so that the widest possible spectrum of collective uses is taken into account.

· Strategies for coming together: strategies validated by both adults and young people for integrating technologies into the home and causing as little change to family relationships as possible have been identified, including the integration of different worlds (family, friends, partner), disconnection to enjoy leisure or outdoor activities and reconnection to share technology with family members with whom they wish to strengthen their relationship.

These strategies do not exclude the need for society as a whole to be involved in managing the digital life of its citizens. The role of families is key, but they cannot replace the responsibility of industry, schools or institutions in regulating platforms, content control and digital skills training.

8. Funding

9. References

Alonso, L. E. (1998). *La mirada cualitativa. Una aproximación interpretativa.* Madrid: Fundamentos.

Bran, L., Romero, K., Echeverri, L., Peña, J., Vásquez, S., Aguilera, M., Herazo, C. and Valencia, A. (2016). Information and communication technologies influence on family relationship. *Global Journal of Health Science, 9*(6), 204. https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v9n6p204

Bucher, T. and Helmond, A. (2017). The affordances of social media platforms. In J. Burgess, A. Marwick y T. Poell (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media* (pp. 233-253). SAGE Publications.

Calderón-Gómez, D. (2021). *Juventud, desigualdad y sociedad digital. Estudio sociológico de las prácticas, brechas y trayectorias biográficas juveniles en el uso de las TIC.* Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.

Calderón-Gómez, D. and Gómez-Miguel, A. (2022). *Consumir, crear, jugar. Panorámica del ocio digital de la juventud.* Madrid: Centro Reina Sofía sobre Adolescencia y Juventud, Fundación FAD Juventud. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6338126

Calderón-Gómez, D. and Kuric, S. (2022). Youth in the digital world. Dispositions and experiences of internet use. In J. Benedicto, M. Urteaga y D. Rocca (Eds.), *Young People in Complex and Unequal Societies. Doing Youth Studies in Spain and Latin America.* Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004507456

Calderón, D., Sanmartín, A. and Kuric, S. (2022). Self-confidence and digital proficiency: Determinants of digital skills perceptions among young people in Spain. *First Monday, 27*(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v27i4.12566

Callejo, J. (2001). *El grupo de discusión: introducción a una práctica de investigación.* Barcelona: Ariel.

Carrasco, F., Droguett, R., Huaiquil, D., Navarrete, A., Quiroz, M. and Binimelis, H. (2017). El uso de dispositivos móviles por niños: Entre el consumo y el cuidado familiar. *Cultura, Hombre y Sociedad, 27*(1), 108-137.

Colectivo IOE (2010). ¿Para qué sirve el grupo de discusión? Una revisión crítica del uso de técnicas grupales en los estudios sobre migraciones. *EMPIRIA. Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales, 19*, 73-99. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272960288_Para_que_sirve_el_grupo_de_discusion_Una_revision_critica_del_uso_de_tecnicas_grupales_en_los_estudios_sobre_migraciones

Conde, F. (2009). *Análisis sociológico del sistema de discursos.* Madrid: CIS.

Eco, U. (2007). *Apocalípticos e integrados.* Madrid: Debolsillo.

Eleuteri, S., Saladino, V. and Verrastro, V. (2017). Identity, relationships, sexuality, and risky behaviors of adolescents in the context of social media. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 32*(3-4), 354-365. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1397953

Eurostat (2021). *Digital economy and society statistics.* Comisión Europea. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database

Gallardo Echenique, E. E. (2013). Hablemos de estudiantes digitales y no de nativos digitales. *UTE Teaching y Technology (Universitas Tarraconensis), 1*(1), 7-21.

Gordo, Á., García-Arnau, A., de Rivera, J. and Díaz-Catalán, C. (2018). *Jóvenes en la encrucijada digital. Itinerarios de socialización y desigualdad en los entornos digitales.* Madrid: Morata.

Hernández Pérez, J. (2022). Plataformización de la sociedad y moderación de contenidos. In G. A. Torres Vargas (Ed.), *Desafíos en el entorno de la información y la documentación ante las problemáticas sociales actuales* (pp. 105-120). México: UNAM.

Ibáñez, J. (1978). *Más allá de la sociología: el grupo de discusión, teoría y crítica.* Madrid: Siglo XXI.

INE (2023). *Encuesta sobre equipamiento y uso de tecnologías de información y comunicación en los hogares 2021.* Instituto Nacional de Estadística. https://www.ine.es

Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE) (2021). *Informe Juventud en España 2020.* Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud.

Lanigan, J. D. (2009). A sociotechnological model for family research and intervention: How information and communication technologies affect family life. *Marriage & Family Review, 45*(6-8), 587-609. https://doi.org/10.1080/01494920903224194

Lasén, A. (2020). Ocio digital juvenil: en cualquier momento, en cualquier lugar. In I. Lazcano Quintana y A. DeJuanas Oliva (Coords.), *Ocio y juventud: sentido, potencial y participación comunitaria.* Madrid: UNED.

Lasén, A. and Casado, E. (2014). Presentación: Convergencias y controversias en torno a las mediaciones tecnológicas de lo ordinario. In A. Lasén y E. Casado (Coords.), *Mediaciones tecnológicas. Cuerpos, afectos y subjetividades* (pp. 7-18). Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2008). Parental mediation of children's internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 52*(4), 581-599. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150802437396

Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2009). Balancing opportunities and risks in teenagers' use of the internet: the role of online skills and internet self-efficacy. *New Media & Society, 12*(2), 309-329. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809342697

Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., Helsper, E. J., Lupiáñez-Villanueva, F., Veltri, G. A. and Folkvord, F. (2017). Maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks for children online: The role of digital skills in emerging strategies of parental mediation. *Journal of Communication, 67*(1), 82-105. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12277

Martín-Perpiñá, M., Poch, F. V. and Cerrato, S. M. (2019). Personality and social context factors associated to self-reported excessive use of information and communication technology (ICT) on a sample of Spanish adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 436. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00436

Megías, I. (2024). *Desde el lado oscuro de los hábitos tecnológicos: riesgos asociados a los usos juveniles de las TIC.* Madrid: Centro Reina Sofía, Fundación Fad Juventud. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10580052

Megías, I., Ballesteros, J. C. and Rodríguez, E. (2022). *Entre la añoranza y la incomprensión. La adolescencia del siglo XXI desde las percepciones del mundo adulto.* Madrid: Centro Reina Sofía sobre Adolescencia y Juventud, Fad. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5343348

Megías, I., Amezaga, A., García, M. C., Kuric, S., Morado, R. and Orgaz, C. (2020). *Romper cadenas de odio, tejer redes de apoyo: los y las jóvenes ante los discursos de odio en la red.* Madrid: Centro Reina Sofía sobre Adolescencia y Juventud, Fad. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4288486

Orgaz, C. (2025). Grupos Esenciales: fundamentos y recomendaciones para las reuniones de grupo online sincrónicas. In E. García, H. Puente, I. Sádaba y M. Santiago (Eds.), *Métodos de Investigación Social Digital.* Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch. [Próxima publicación].

Sanmartín, A., Ballesteros, J. C., Calderón, D. and Kuric, S. (2020). *De puertas adentro y de pantallas afuera. Jóvenes en confinamiento.* Madrid: Centro Reina Sofía sobre Adolescencia y Juventud, Fad. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4054836

Notes

1   The term "multimedia" is used to refer to how the digital communication ecosystem is characterised by its mobility, diversification and multiplicity, since a wide variety of devices are used to interact with the social environment (Calderón-Gómez and Gómez-Miguel, 2022).

2   Here we mention differences detected in the interest of exemplifying different positions with regard to the advantages and risks of technology use. However, these viewpoints must be contrasted in future research with a larger sample size.

3   Based on the definition of the polarity of apocalyptic and integrated put forward by Umberto Eco (2007).

Anna Sanmartín Ortí

Having earned her PhD in sociology from the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), she is the director of the Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud and a member of the Network for Youth and Society Studies (*Red de Estudios sobre Juventud y Sociedad*, REJS). She specialises in the analysis of youth socialisation and has published works examining gender roles, political participation, leisure and consumption, and the impact of technology.

Stribor Kuric

He holds a PhD in sociology and anthropology (2019) from the Complutense University of Madrid. He has worked as a social research technician at the Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud since 2020 and as a lecturer at CES Cardenal Cisneros (UCM) since 2021. His main lines of research are the sociology of work from a gender perspective and the sociology of youth.

Christian Orgaz

He holds a PhD in sociology and anthropology (2018) from the Complutense University of Madrid. He is the co-founder of Indaga (2011) and serves as its projects and research coordinator. Specialising in migration, methodology and the study of society, technology and professions, he gives lectures at the UCM and the UNED. He is also the co-founder of the Archivo de Sociología Crítica (https://archivosociologiacritica.org/).

Manuel Blanco Campos

He holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Carlos III University, Madrid (2014), as well as a postgraduate degree in training specialists in applied social research and data analysis (2020) and a master's degree in advanced studies in work and employment (2021). He has worked at Indaga as a technician since 2021 and as a cooperative member since 2023. His main lines of research include new forms of employment (NFE), research methodologies and organisational analysis.

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

A Reading of the 2030 Agenda from the Paradigm of Socio-ecological and Intercultural Sustainability
Application in Coastal Territories of Vulnerable Fishing Communities

Una lectura de la Agenda 2030 desde el paradigma de la sostenibilidad socioecológica e intercultural
Aplicación en territorios costeros de comunidades pesqueras vulnerables

Antonio Sianes
Loyola Andalucía University, Spain
asianes@uloyola.es

Laura Serrano
Loyola Andalucía University, Spain
lserrano@uloyola.es

Johana Herrera-Arango
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia
herrera.johana@javeriana.edu.co

Rocío Vela-Jiménez
Loyola Andalucía University, Spain
mrvela@uloyola.es

Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Colombia
manperez@javeriana.edu.co

Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez
External researcher
cacastanosgomez@gmail.com

Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos
Loyola Andalucía University, Spain
jasenent@uloyola.es

ABSTRACT

The 2030 Agenda constitutes a global reference framework for promoting social, economic and environmental development processes. However, its effective territorial implementation presents significant challenges. As a complex and multidimensional agenda, it necessitates localised interpretations. This article presents an interpretation of the 2030 Agenda in coastal territories inhabited by vulnerable fishing communities, aiming to foster socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability. In these contexts, socio-cultural dynamics and environmental impacts are increasingly marginalising communities that maintain traditional and identity-based ways of life, along with valuable knowledge essential for sustaining and developing livelihoods within these socio-ecological spaces. We employ the Delphi method and dialogue, alongside experts, between fishing communities in Andalusia and the Colombian Caribbean to collaboratively develop an indicator system. By adapting those of the 2030 Agenda, this system enables the monitoring of the development challenges these communities face.

HOW TO REFERENCE: Sianes, A., Herrera-Arango, J., Pérez-Martínez, M. E., Serrano, L., Vela-Jiménez, R., Castaños Gómez, C. A. and Senent-De Frutos, J. A. (2025). Una lectura de la Agenda 2030 desde el paradigma de la sostenibilidad socioecológica e intercultural. Aplicación en territorios costeros de comunidades pesqueras vulnerables. *Revista Centra de Ciencias Sociales, 4*(1), 83-106. https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.99

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.99

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez, Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

RESUMEN

La Agenda 2030 constituye un marco global de referencia para promover procesos de desarrollo social, económico y ambiental. Sin embargo, su adecuada territorialización presenta notorios desafíos, al ser una agenda compleja y multidimensional, requiere interpretaciones localizadas. Presentamos una lectura de dicha Agenda en territorios costeros de comunidades pesqueras vulnerables que puede ayudar a promover la sostenibilidad socioecológica interculturalmente. En estos ámbitos, las dinámicas socioculturales y los impactos ambientales están dejando al margen a este tipo de comunidades que mantienen formas de vida tradicionales e identitarias de profesión, así como un conocimiento para el cuidado y desarrollo de un modo de vida en estos espacios socioecológicos. Empleamos el método Delphi y el diálogo entre comunidades pesqueras en Andalucía y Caribe colombiano y expertos, para crear de manera conjunta un sistema de indicadores que, adaptando los de la Agenda 2030, permita dar seguimiento a los retos de desarrollo que afrontan.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Agenda 2030; sostenibilidad socioecológica e intercultural; comunidades vulnerables; Delphi; territorializacion; indicadores.

1. Introduction

Traditional fishing communities, such as San Luis de Sabinillas in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia (Spain) and the Barú Peninsula in the Department of Bolívar (Colombia), have been undergoing continuous and unrelenting decline for decades. Taking the community of Sabinillas as an example, in the early 1980s, 28 fishing boats operated out of Puerto de la Duquesa. Today, barely five remain. A 2004 study by Camiñas, Domínguez and Abad on Andalusian fisheries identified between 20 and 25 shellfish boats at the time. Despite their extensive experience, fishers and their families face mounting adversity, with an increasing number of factors restricting both the maritime spaces available for their activities and the species they are permitted to catch.

This decline stems from a combination of socio-economic and political factors, particularly the effects of commodification on the reproduction of territorial vulnerabilities (Prudham, 2009). Capital values nature as a source of raw materials and energy yet remains largely disengaged from the complexities and interconnections of ecological systems, climate change and biodiversity loss (Castree, 2003). The territorial vulnerability of traditional communities, such as those analysed here, is intrinsically linked to the transformation of nature's biophysical properties—a process that reshapes nature to facilitate its more efficient integration into capital circuits (Nevins and Peluso, 2008).

Support from public administrations and private entities for vulnerable fishing communities has been steadily declining. In response, 2023 saw the launch of the research project "From Coast to Coast", aimed at fostering robust networks between traditional fishing communities and other relevant stakeholders. This initiative is

founded on the principle that these communities are rightful subjects whose historical and legitimate access to the sea should be recognised and safeguarded, while also acknowledging their contribution to socio-ecological sustainability. The communities examined in this study are as follows: San Luis de Sabinillas, a fishing community located in the municipality of Manilva (Málaga), with a population of nearly 7,000. Currently, the five fishing boats engaged in small-scale fisheries specialise in harvesting wedge clams, carpet shell clams and smooth clams, while one boat is dedicated to octopus fishing. These boats are part of the Estepona fishermen's guild and sell their catch at its fish market.

On the Caribbean side, the community of Barú is located in the district of Cartagena de Indias. At present, 197 artisanal fishers are registered, and the community has a total population of 3,800, the majority of whom are of Afro-descendant heritage. Many boats are equipped with low-powered outboard motors, while some vessels still rely solely on oars to navigate fishing areas. Fishing techniques in the region are diverse, though the most prominent is hook-and-line fishing using live bait, known locally as *línea de mano*. Other common methods include free diving to catch octopuses and lobsters, as well as the use of gillnets for snapper and similar species (Bolaños *et al.*, 2020).

One of the initial milestones of this project is to situate these communities' struggles for dignity within the framework of the Agenda, a global policy initiative aimed at transforming the world through the promotion of sustainable development (Hepp, Somerville and Borisch, 2019). To this end, we initiated a dialogue process between fishing communities and an interuniversity group of experts to redefine an indicator system aligned with the Agenda.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The origins and socio-political significance of the 2030 Agenda

In 2015, the United Nations formally adopted the document "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", commonly referred to as the 2030 Agenda. Its principal objective is to inform and guide public policies and private sector interventions across a broad range of social, economic and environmental domains (Sianes, 2021). The Agenda aims to drive global change towards resilience in the pursuit of sustainable development (Hepp, Somerville and Borisch, 2019).

To achieve this, the Agenda sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 specific targets to be pursued over a 15-year period. This extensive scope reflects both the scale and the profound ambition of this new framework, which seeks to dismantle traditional North-South dynamics. However, this comprehensive and global vision has also made the Agenda a target of criticism, particularly from anti-globalisation movements and ultraconservative nationalist groups.

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Despite this, the Agenda and its SDGs have succeeded in establishing themselves as a clear reference framework (Sianes *et al.*, 2022) for advancing initiatives aimed at improving living conditions in particularly disadvantaged communities, territories and regions. Nonetheless, as a global policy designed for local implementation, the necessary process of localisation presents a series of challenges stemming from the inherent limitations of the Agenda's design (Serrano and Sianes, 2023).

2.2. Limitations in the operationalisation of the 2030 Agenda

For local adoption, a process of adaptation to specific on-the-ground realities is required (Vela-Jiménez and Sianes, 2022). These limitations manifest in three key areas.

First, most social interventions must navigate the Agenda to identify the SDGs and targets that address the multidimensional nature of the issues at hand. To facilitate this process, both academic literature and international agencies have been developing frameworks for interpreting the Agenda (Vela-Jiménez *et al.*, 2022; Maldonado-Valera, Marinho and Robles, 2020).

Second, given that the Agenda comprises 17 goals spanning different domains, inevitable tensions and *trade-offs* arise between them, highlighting the difficulty of achieving comprehensive implementation. The academic literature has extensively examined this challenge (Arroyo-Ilera, 2021; Fuso-Nerini *et al.*, 2018), yet clear strategies for addressing these conflicts remain lacking.

Third, the more than 240 indicators established to assess progress in implementing the Agenda were not designed with local contexts in mind, nor do they consider a plurality of stakeholders. Instead, they are formulated at the national or even global level. This misalignment complicates the application of these indicators in local and even regional interventions, making it difficult to align initiatives with the SDGs and effectively track their impact.

The objectives of this article are to shed light on the first and third of these challenges by offering an interpretation of the Agenda that seeks to improve the quality of life of traditional fishing communities. These communities are regarded as active subjects capable of contributing to public decision-making processes that affect their socio-ecological spaces in both Andalusia and the Colombian Caribbean. However, such an interpretation can only be developed through an ontological, epistemological and ethical approach to their specific challenges, the principles of which are outlined below.

2.3. Starting approach to interpreting the 2030 Agenda: the paradigm of socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability in vulnerable populations

Through a reflective exercise, this research process is grounded in a specific world view and paradigm: that of socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability as ap-

plied to particularly vulnerable communities and territories. Below, we outline some key principles of the conceptual framework that underpins this analysis.

2.3.1. The socio-ecological perspective as a framework for addressing ecosystem challenges

The socio-ecological perspective emphasises a reciprocal feedback relationship and an explicit connection between social and ecological systems. This interaction encompasses biophysical factors, local knowledge and governance institutions, as well as the rules that shape how people engage with ecosystems (Armitage *et al.*, 2017). Analytically, socio-ecological systems exhibit significant structural and functional complexity due to the co-evolution of specific practices, such as fisheries management systems. Humans within nature constitute a complex adaptive system, one that tends to generate feedback loops in ways that are not always predictable (Berkes, 2015).

2.3.2. Interculturality vs acculturation in integrating traditional ways of life

This paradigm (Senent-De Frutos and Herrera Arango, 2022) seeks not only to support or promote the inclusion of these vulnerable individuals and communities but also, from an intercultural ethical perspective, to ensure fair treatment. These communities sustain a traditional way of life that has been marginalised by a development model that obstructs or even prevents its continuity. They should be recognised as active subjects and communities with the capacity and right to contribute to public and private decision-making processes that affect the socio-ecological spaces they inhabit and where they conduct their activities. Through their intergenerational persistence, these communities have demonstrated a sustainable way of life, both socially and environmentally. As such, they should play a key role in understanding the socio-environmental challenges facing these spaces, as well as in decision-making processes aimed at mitigating the negative ecological impacts that threaten biodiversity and the continuity of fishing activities. The shifting conditions brought about by the ecological crisis must be addressed not only through available scientific knowledge but also through dialogue with the socio-environmental knowledge held by these communities.

2.3.3. The multidimensional nature of exclusion in vulnerable populations

The Agenda itself necessitates addressing inclusive and sustainable development processes from a multidimensional perspective, based on three considerations. First, social exclusion extends beyond a lack of economic income; it encompasses factors such as housing, education and healthcare, as well as broader social dimensions, including access to services, community and social support, security, and social and political participation (Vela-Jiménez and Sianes, 2021). Second, it requires the localisation of knowledge on exclusion, starting from the highest level of specificity at the local scale (Vela-Jiménez *et al.*, 2022). Third, a participatory approach must be incorporated to capture the qualitative dimensions of exclusion (Labonté *et al.*, 2011; Vela-Jiménez and Sianes, 2021, 2023).

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

2.3.4. Vulnerable territories: commodification dynamics and community resistance

The concept of a vulnerable territory is shaped by various theoretical perspectives that underscore the enduring significance of the process of primitive accumulation in structuring the context of globalised capitalism. Both academic literature (Harvey, 2008; Slater, 2017; Jover–Báez *et al.*, 2023) and social praxis highlight how this process remains a fundamental mechanism for the expansion of capitalism and the consolidation of neoliberal cultural hegemony. The commodification, appropriation and privatisation of natural and cultural resources, as well as tangible and intangible knowledge, accelerate their degradation by reconfiguring the geographical structure of the capitalist system. This process establishes the conditions for a system marked by widespread inequality, resource exploitation and the erosion of local control, thereby perpetuating the exclusion and marginalisation of communities.

3. Research design

3.1. Objectives

This study pursues three objectives:

- First, to identify the SDGs and indicators proposed by the 2030 Agenda that are relevant to fishing areas from a multidimensional perspective.
- Second, to assess the potential of the 2030 Agenda for these interventions, examining the extent to which the indicators within each SDG reflect the possible impacts of projects of this nature.
- Third, where existing indicators do not adequately capture these impacts, to propose recommendations for reformulating the relevant indicators within each SDG, offering revised wording as an alternative.

3.2. Methodological approach

The research strategy involved applying a Delphi methodology (Cañizares Cedeño and Suárez Mena, 2022) with a pool of seven interdisciplinary researchers, each with expertise in different areas relevant to the study: public development policies, the sustainability of marine ecosystems, interculturality and sustainability from a critical perspective, processes of commodification and territorial marketisation, the multidimensional approach to exclusion and the development of indicator systems, among others.

The Delphi methodology was structured into five phases between May and October 2023:

· First phase: individual review of the Agenda to identify the SDGs, targets and indicators most relevant to fishing areas from a socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability perspective.
· Second phase: initial discussion to consolidate the SDGs, targets and indicators common across all individual selections and to deliberate on those where discrepancies arose.
· Third phase: individual work focused on refining proposed modifications to the selected indicators to ensure they incorporate the principles of this project.
· Fourth phase: second discussion session to review the proposed alternative wording and enhance the Agenda's capacity to identify the challenges faced by the analysed communities.
· Fifth phase: collaborative drafting of the final report, including a proposal for territorialised indicators adapted to the principles of the intervention.

4. Results: identification of SDGs, targets and linked indicators

To determine the SDGs, targets and indicators most relevant to these communities from a socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability perspective, extracts from conversations with community members were analysed at two key stages: first, during the needs identification process that established the relevance of this study, and second, during the preparation phase of the intervention.

To systematically present the results, verbatim excerpts from these conversations will be used to link community needs with the guiding principles of the research approach, as well as with the corresponding SDGs, targets and indicators.

Regarding SDG 1, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 1.

> The limited income [earned by fishers] is used for subsistence [for themselves and their families]. [...] improving and ensuring stable income for fishing communities would create better opportunities to access services and [improve their] quality of life (informant from San Luis de Sabinillas).

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Table 1

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 1

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.	Target 1.4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services, including microfinance.	Indicator 1.4.2. Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 2, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 2.

> Traditional fishing activities are becoming increasingly restricted; [...] it is necessary to develop strategies that support food security (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 2

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 2

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.	Target 2.3. By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment […].	Indicator 2.3.1. Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size.
		Indicator 2.3.2. Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status.
	Target 2.4. By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, [...] and that progressively improve land and soil quality.	Indicator 2.4.1. Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture.

Source: own research.

The next relevant SDG is SDG 5, linked to the following statement and associated targets and indicators in Table 3.

> The majority of members of the fishing community are men. [They believe that] the role of women in fishing is not significant. [However,] women could make substantial contributions, so it is important to integrate them [systematically and in an organised manner into various activities along the fishing production chain][1] (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 3
Relevant targets and indicators for SDG5

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.	Target 5.5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.	Indicator 5.5.2. Proportion of women in managerial positions.
	Target 5.a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.	Indicator 5.a.1. (a) Percentage of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (out of total agricultural population), by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.
		Indicator 5.a.2. Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 6, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 4.

> [It is necessary to] develop strategies to mitigate, reduce and/or compensate for these impacts (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 4
Relevant targets and indicators for SDG6

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	Target 6.3. By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.	Indicator 6.3.2. Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality.
	Target 6.b. Support and strengthen the participation of local communities for improving water and sanitation management.	Indicator 6.b.1. Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.

Source: own research.

The next SDG to be considered is SDG 8, for which the following statement is particularly relevant, linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 5.

> [It is necessary to] ensure that [artisanal fishers] have the necessary tools to carry out their work with dignity, achieving better outcomes (informant from Sabinillas).

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez, Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Table 5

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 8

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Target 8.3. Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalisation and growth of micro-sized enterprises [...].	Indicator 8.3.1. Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex.
	Target 8.4. Improve progressively through 2030 global resource efficiency in consumption and production, and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation […].	Indicator 8.4.1. Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 10, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 6.

> Before the arrival of outsiders purchasing land along the coastline, the community thrived. At that time, I felt happy here because we had everything. Mangoes, coconuts, cassava, plums, sugar apples, lemons, papayas. We supplied Cartagena with our harvest. Now, the local people are becoming poorer—more money circulates, but it does not reach the natives (informant from Barú).

Table 6

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 10

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.	Target 10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.	Indicator 10.2.1. Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex and age.

Source: own research.

SDG 11 is among the most relevant to interventions of this nature, as reflected in the following statement, which is linked to the targets and indicators listed in Table 7.

> There must be synergy between territorial entities and fishing communities to drive the development of this area (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 7

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 11

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.	Target 11.1. By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums.	Indicator 11.1.1. Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing.
	Target 11.3. By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacities for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.	Indicator 11.3.2. Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically.
	Target 11.4. Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.	Indicator 11.4.1. Total per capita expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by source of funding (public, private), type of heritage (cultural, natural) and level of government (national, regional and local/municipal).
	Target 11.a. Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.	Indicator 11.a.1. Number of countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans that (a) respond to population dynamics, (b) ensure balanced territorial development, (c) increase local fiscal space.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 12, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 8.

> Ensuring the fishing of commercial species would promote the sustainability of the fishing industry (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 8

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 12

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	Target 12.8. By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.	Indicator 12.8.1. Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.
	Target 12.b. Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products.	Indicator 12.b.1. Implementation of standard accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 13, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 9.

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

The seas are no longer the same—we have to go farther and farther to fish, yet the catch is insufficient for our needs. The sea is warmer, currents have shifted and species valuable to fishers have moved away ever since the mangroves were cleared to make way for beaches and hotels (informant from Barú).

Table 9

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 13

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	Target 13.2. Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.	Indicator 13.2.1. Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans, strategies as reported in adaptation communications and national communications submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat.
		Indicator 13.2.2. Total greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 14, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 10.

The natural environment must be conserved and restored (informant from Sabinillas).

Table 10

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 14

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	Target 14.2. By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration, to achieve healthy and productive oceans.	Indicator 14.2.1. Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas.
	Target 14.4. By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting, and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.	Indicator 14.4.1. Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels.
	Target 14.5. By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information.	Indicator 14.5.1. Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.
	Target 14.b. Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.	Indicator 14.b.1. Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognises and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 15, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 11.

> We are replanting coral, restoring mangroves and learning more about seagrass restoration. The Barú community is committed to reclaiming the paradise we once were before the mass arrival of tourism and private investors (informant from Barú).

Table 11

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 15

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.	Target 15.5. Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.	Indicator 15.5.1. Red List Index.
	Target 15.9. By 2020, integrate ecosystems and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes and poverty reduction strategies, and accounts.	15.9.1(a) Number of countries that have established national targets in accordance with or similar to Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in their national biodiversity strategy and action plans and the progress reported towards these targets; and (b) integration of biodiversity into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting.

Source: own research.

Regarding SDG 16, the following statement is particularly relevant and is linked to the targets and indicators outlined in Table 12.

> The state has indeed come to Barú, but only to create parks and protected areas. [...] Of course, we want to conserve the sea, but we also want to participate in decision-making. Instead, the state's actions only foster conflict (informant from Barú).

Table 12

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 16

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	Target 16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.	Indicator 16.7.1. Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures, (b) the public service and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups.
		Indicator 16.7.2. Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group.

Source: own research.

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Finally, regarding SDG 17, the intervention proposal has been designed with a trans-national mutual learning approach between two traditional fishing communities—one in Sabinillas (Andalusia, Spain) and the other in Barú (Colombia)—with the aim of contributing to the global challenges of ocean management. The following excerpts from the intervention proposal highlight principles that align with the targets and indicators presented in Table 13.

> [One of the project's objectives is] to strengthen knowledge networks related to marine-coastal transitions affecting local populations in contexts of inequality, where livelihoods are closely connected to the sea, through a comparative case study approach (formulation of the "From Coast to Coast" project).

Table 13

Relevant targets and indicators for SDG 17

SDG	Goals	Indicators
ODS17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.	Target 17.16. Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, particularly developing countries.	17.16.1. Number of countries reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that support the achievement of the SDGs.
	Target 17.17. Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.	17.17.1. Amount in United States dollars committed to public-private partnerships for infrastructure.
	Target 17.19. By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries.	17.19.1. US dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries.

Source: own research.

The analysis demonstrates that up to 13 of the 17 SDGs are linked to an intervention of this nature.

5. Discussion: limitations and proposals for improvement

5.1. General limitations of existing SDGs, targets and indicators

This project is grounded in a socio-ecological and intercultural sustainability perspective, aiming to revalue traditional ways of life, particularly the relationship between traditional fishing communities and the sea. The first notable finding is that this perspective encounters several general limitations within the Agenda:

- While an initial reading of the SDGs and most targets may suggest adequate coverage of the challenges addressed, a closer examination of their wording reveals significant biases, such as the distinction between terrestrial and marine challenges.
- A similar bias is evident in the difficulties of applying an intercultural perspective. Identifying proposals that explicitly recognise communities with distinct socio-cultural identities, such as traditional fishing communities, as a differentiated group remains particularly challenging. It is important to highlight that fishing is not merely a socio-economic activity but a way of life (Florido, 2020), encompassing a unique form of social organisation, a deep-rooted sense of social and territorial identity and an intergenerationally transmitted body of knowledge. These communities also face political and regulatory challenges, as they are often insufficiently recognised and respected in their collective capacity to sustain their traditional way of life. Decisions regarding territorial development are frequently imposed on them by public or private actors without their participation or meaningful consideration.
- Another overarching issue is that, despite many indicators requiring assessment at the local scale, the majority are difficult to adapt and implement territorially.

Finally, it is important to highlight a cross-cutting issue: the Agenda as a whole lacks a political dimension that critically examines the control of resources and means of production. This omission directly affects the agency and decision-making capacities of communities. Recent research underscores that the contribution of artisanal fisheries to food security and poverty reduction, particularly in developing countries, necessitates their inclusion in discussions on the SDGs (Bitoun, 2024).

Building on the three identified limitations, the analysis further examines the indicators outlined in the results section to determine: which indicators can directly assess the impact of a process of this nature, which require adaptation (such as shifting from a national to a local scale or incorporating marine dimensions alongside terrestrial ones) and which are entirely inapplicable or non-existent, thereby necessitating the proposal of new indicators or, at the very least, the principles for their development. The following section focuses specifically on this last case.

5.2. Guidelines for adapting selected indicators and proposals for reformulation

This section reviews a selection of indicators[2] and outlines the analytical process for their reformulation in response to the general limitations identified.

The first issue examined is the presence of *maritime and terrestrial bias* perspectives. Indicator 1.4.2, "Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land", is analysed. The key question to consider for this group is: Do traditional fishing communities have any preferential rights of access to the sea as fishers?

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences | January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez, Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Rather than focusing solely on land tenure, the Agenda should also assess whether fishing communities have rights over the production factors essential to their work, and therefore access to income derived from their labour. New indicators could be introduced to measure these communities' priority access to docking ports, which today serve primarily as recreational rather than working spaces. It is essential to ensure the identification, recognition, protection, allocation and management of tenure rights in fisheries, encompassing both rights over the sea and access rights to the sea and other bodies of water that sustain their way of life.

Thus, while the existing indicator could be useful, it requires adjustments to adequately account for maritime areas:

- Proposed indicator 1.4.i: Proportion of the total fishing population with secure tenure rights that (a) possess legally recognised documentation and (b) consider their rights secure, by sex and type of tenure.
- Proposed indicator 1.4.ii: Extent to which the state recognises, respects and protects all forms of legitimate tenure rights, taking into account, where applicable, customary rights over aquatic resources and small-scale fishing lands and areas used by fishing communities.
- Proposed indicator 1.4.iii: Extent to which fishing communities have institutionalised local norms or practices (rules of the game) regarding preferential access and customary rights to fishing areas.
- Proposed indicator 1.4.iv: Degree to which small-scale fishers and their communities enjoy secure, equitable and culturally and socially appropriate tenure rights over fishery resources and coastal or riverside land to ensure and facilitate access to fishing and related activities.

The exclusion of maritime realities from the Agenda is evident across all its dimensions. In the economic dimension, this bias appears in indicator 2.3.1, "Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size", and indicator 2.4.1, "Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture". In the social dimension, a similar exclusion is present in indicator 5.a.1, "Percentage of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (out of total agricultural population), by sex". Even in the environmental dimension, indicator 6.b.1, "Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management", fails to consider marine waters.

The second limitation identified is the *lack of consideration for different socio-cultural identities within the Agenda.* To illustrate this, indicator 8.3.1, "Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex", is analysed.

In the fishing sector, informality should be accounted for in an Agenda that aspires to be comprehensive. The reality of maritime work is characterised by precarious contracts, such as part-time employment and seasonal work, which in turn affect retirement benefits. To address these issues, additional indicators could be introduced to capture relevant data:

- Indicator 8.3.i: Percentage of traditional fishers receiving a contributory pension for their fishing activity.
- Indicator 8.3.ii: Percentage of fishers receiving a pension equal to or greater than the minimum wage.

The informality measured by indicator 8.3.1 should be interpreted more broadly to reflect the actual challenges faced by these communities, particularly the presence of furtive (unregulated or illegal) fishers, who exploit and deplete fishing grounds without extraction limits or sanitary controls. To monitor this issue, another indicator could be incorporated:

- Indicator 8.3.iii: Percentage of furtive fishers relative to traditional fishers organised within guilds.

Aligned with the recognition of diverse socio-cultural identities, indicator 12.8.1, "Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment", is also noteworthy. The Agenda integrates awareness-raising dimensions within target 12.8 and target 4.7, yet neither includes concrete indicators.

Given the strong cultural significance of traditional fishing communities, additional indicators could be developed to highlight and value their activity and its impact on territorial culture:

- 12.8.i: Number of literary works, artistic pieces, etc., that highlight and promote lives connected to artisanal fishing.
- 12.8.ii: Extent to which education on the value of artisanal and small-scale fisheries is incorporated into local, regional and national education policies.

The third challenge is *incorporating a local or regional perspective into indicators that are primarily designed at the national or global level* to enable the implementation of policies and interventions with meaningful impact at these levels of public administration. To illustrate the limitations of the Agenda's predominantly global approach, indicator 14.2.1, "Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas", is examined.

By establishing this indicator at the national level, the opportunity to integrate an ecosystem-based approach into local coastal management is overlooked. A local perspective would facilitate the dissemination of policies across regions. It would be

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

beneficial to assess whether local or regional/autonomous governments and communities apply an ecosystem-based approach to coastal management:

- 14.2.i: Number of local agreements/plans/policies that apply an ecosystem-based approach to managing coastal areas in the study region.

This local perspective can be integrated directly, as in the previous example, but also indirectly by incorporating a participatory governance approach:

- 14.2.ii: Number of countries that include artisanal or small-scale fisheries as part of the ecosystem-based management of marine areas.

Furthermore, by addressing this third limitation (lack of localisation) alongside the second limitation previously discussed (failure to incorporate diverse socio-cultural identities), composite indicators can be developed that integrate both dimensions, such as:

- 14.2.iii: Extent of participation by artisanal and small-scale fishers in plans or programmes aimed at eliminating illegal or unregulated fishing.
- 14.2.iv: Extent of participation by artisanal and small-scale fishers in the zoning of Marine Protected Areas, ensuring that the effects of such designations on fishers are considered and mitigated.

This focus on localising and territorialising the indicators of the Agenda is also evident in those included under SDGs 16 and 17, which specifically address its governance. As an illustrative example, we consider indicator 16.7.2, "Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group".

A perception-based indicator is relevant at the national level, as participatory and deliberative democratic spaces are primarily established at the local level. However, by incorporating this dimension, it becomes possible to develop objective indicators for inclusive decision-making:

- 16.7.i: "Number of decision-making and networking spaces between fishers' guilds and local (or regional) fisheries management authorities."

Additionally, indicators can be introduced to measure the extent of shared responsibility in these collaborative processes:

- 16.7.ii. "Proportion of guild members participating in decision-making and networking spaces."

Addressing the local dimension of the Agenda enables the inclusion of other socio-cultural identities present in the territory.

6. Conclusions

The 2030 Agenda serves more as a normative framework with broad political guidelines than as an operational programme that provides clear direction for implementing specific actions to achieve its indicators. This framework lacks critical elements, making it challenging to integrate deeply transformative proposals, such as the socio-ecological and intercultural approach examined in this analysis.

Moreover, the Agenda is designed at a global scale, which limits the ability of locally designed and executed interventions to contribute to the effective implementation of the SDGs. The existing indicators are largely insensitive to local and even regional impacts, which can be discouraging for public and private entities responsible for their implementation and promotion.

However, collaborative efforts between communities—fishing communities, in this case—and academic institutions, through horizontal and *bottom-up* research processes, can help address these limitations. As demonstrated, it is possible to integrate the key concerns of communities into the 2030 Agenda, but doing so requires a critical reassessment. Developing more localised and qualitative indicators—many of which are not currently reflected in available secondary sources—would necessitate commitments to data collection and management. This, in turn, requires generating and maintaining information at the territorial level, securing the active participation of fishing communities, public administration and relevant social stakeholders. Ensuring access to this information requires fostering spaces for participation and collaboration among all actors involved. Thus, three levels of indicators are identified, each providing complementary information to better understand the realities faced by fishing communities. First, indicators available in secondary sources, published in various institutional repositories. Second, indicators from relevant public administrations, accessible through prior consultation. Obtaining this information requires networked collaboration, as these entities are not necessarily obligated to publish it, and some indicators have yet to be developed. Third, indicators that can only be obtained at the territorial level. Accessing this information necessitates fostering participatory spaces that facilitate the collection of insights from fishing communities and relevant social stakeholders to develop and manage qualitative indicators. It is essential to recognise that participation, empowerment and fair treatment of local communities in the development of these indicators not only enhance the quality and relevance of the data collected but also strengthen social cohesion and community resilience. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of reinforcing the functional role of territorial dynamics within local governments by integrating multilevel and multi-actor mechanisms to coordinate public policy decisions. This requires collaborative efforts across different levels of government to accelerate the territorial implementation of the SDGs and ensure their effective local adaptation.

These findings may serve as a reference for ongoing discussions on ocean-related issues from an ecosystemic and socio-ecological perspective. The Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development presents a key opportunity to strengthen rec-

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences | January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez, Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

ognition of the contributions of artisanal fishers to sustainability and their role in the necessary transitions amid climate change and ocean degradation. In Europe, the recently enacted Nature Restoration Law will enable various stakeholders to set conservation targets, with fishing organisations playing a crucial role in this process. In Colombia, the newly introduced Mangrove Law, alongside other coastal and marine regulatory instruments, aims to implement conservation models that uphold the rights of local fishing communities and Afro-descendant groups.

Regarding the methodology presented, it serves as an analytical framework offering recommendations to advance the complexification, territorial implementation and intercultural integration of the 2030 Agenda. This approach improves the effectiveness of its indicators, which, in their current form, may discourage decision-makers, particularly at the local and regional levels. Undoubtedly, this represents the study's most significant practical implication.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the study's limitations. The main limitation is that it was developed through a predominantly technical and academic reflection process. While dialogue with the community has helped surface their concerns, a fully shared reading of the Agenda was not possible during the initial phases of the intervention.

These limitations are already being addressed in future lines of research, involving horizontal dialogue with the fishing communities of San Luis de Sabinillas and Barú. We extend our recognition and gratitude to these communities for inspiring and enabling this analysis and, hopefully, for being the beneficiaries of its insights. We also appreciate the collaboration of the Manilva Municipal Council, through the Department of Fisheries, as well as the contributions of researchers David Florido and Jorge Sáez, who have supported these activities.

7. Funding

8. References

Armitage, D., Charles, A. and Berkes, F. (Eds.) (2017). *Governing the Coastal Commons: Communities, Resilience and Transformation.* New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688480

Arroyo-Ilera, F. (2021). Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible: Contradicciones e incertidumbres. *Revista Encuentros multidisciplinares*, *23*, 69 (septiembre–diciembre).

Berkes, F. (2015). *Coasts for People. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Costal and Marine Resource Management.* New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315771038

Bitoun, R. E., Léopold, M., Razanakoto, T., Randrianandrasana, R., Akintola, S. L., Bach, P. and Devillers, R. (2024). A methodological framework for capturing marine small-scale fisheries' contributions to the sustainable development goals. *Sustainability Science*, 1-19.

Bolaños, O., Herrera, J. and Arrieta, M. R. (2020). Collective land tenure in island areas of Colombia: Legal challenges and obstacles. *Proceedings of the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty.*

Camiñas, J. A., Domínguez, J. B. and Abad, R. (2004). *La pesca en el Mediterráneo andaluz.* Servicio de Publicaciones de la Fundación Unicaja.

Cañizares Cedeño, E. L. and Suárez Mena, K. E. (2022). El Método Delphi Cualitativo y su Rigor Científico: Una revisión argumentativa. *Sociedad & Tecnología*, *5*(3), 530-540. https://doi.org/10.51247/st.v5i3.261

Castree, N. (2003). Commodifying what nature? *Progress in human geography*, *27*(3), 273-297.

Florido del Corral, David (2020). Hibridaciones de saberes y lógicas culturales en la pesca. *Estudios Atacameños*, 65, 21-45. https://doi.org/10.22199/issn.0718-1043-2020-0019

Fuso Nerini, F., Tomei, J., To, L. S., Bisaga, I., Parikh, P., Black, M. *et al.* (2018). Mapping Synergies and Trade-offs Between Energy and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Energy*, *3*(1), 10-15.

Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Hepp, P., Somerville, C. and Borisch, B. (2019). Accelerating the United Nation's 2030 Global Agenda: Why prioritization of the gender goal is essential. *Global Policy*, *10*(4), 677-685.

Jover-Báez, J., Barrero-Rescalvo, M. and Díaz-Parra, I. (2023). 'All our eggs in one basket': touristification and displacement amidst the pandemic in Seville, Spain. *City*, 27 (5-6), 829-849, https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2023.2225233

Labonté, R., Hadi, A. and Kauffmann, X. E. (2011). Indicators of Social Exclusion and Inclusion: A Critical and Comparative Analysis of the Literature. *É/Exchange Working Papers Series*, *2*(8), 1-142.

Maldonado Valera, C., Marinho, M. and Robles, C. (2020). *Inclusión y cohesión social en el marco de la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible: claves para un desarrollo social inclusivo en América Latina, Documentos de Proyectos (LC/TS.2020/59).* Santiago: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL).

Nevins, J. and Peluso, N. L. (2008). Introduction: Commoditization in Southeast Asia. In *Taking Southeast Asia to market: Commodities, nature, and people in the neoliberal age* (pp. 1-26). SIRD.

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Prudham, S. (2009). Commodification. *A companion to environmental geography* (pp. 123-142). Blackwell.

Sanahuja, J. A. (2019). Crisis de la globalización, el regionalismo y el orden liberal: el ascenso mundial del nacionalismo y la extrema derecha. *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política*, *28*(1), 59-94. https://doi.org/10.26851/rucp.28.1.3

Senent-De Frutos, J. A. and Herrera Arango, J. (2022). Contributions of Intercultural Socioenvironmental Justice to the 2030 Agenda in the Colombian Caribbean. *Land*, *11*(6), 835.

Serrano, L. and Sianes, A. (2023). Una mirada al Derecho a la ciudad en clave de gobernanza global: límites y limitaciones de la Agenda 2030. *Agenda 2030, Derechos Humanos y territorios.* Madrid: Tirant lo Blanch.

Sianes, A. (2021). Academic research on the 2030 agenda: challenges of a Transdisciplinary field of study. *Global Policy*, *12*(3), 286-297.

Slater, T. (2017). Planetary Rent Gaps. *Antipode*, 49, 117-139.

United Nations General Assembly (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* New York: United Nations.

Vela-Jiménez, R. and Sianes, A. (2021). Do Current Measures of Social Exclusion Depict the Multidimensional Challenges of Marginalized Urban Areas? Insights, Gaps and Future Research. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(15), 7993. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18157993

Vela-Jiménez, R. and Sianes, A. (2023). *Desafíos para la gobernanza participativa de las políticas de transformación social en los barrios desfavorecidos de Andalucía: adopción multinivel y adaptación al territorio.* Universidad Loyola Andalucía. https://repositorio.uloyola.es/handle/20.500.12412/4034

Vela-Jiménez, R., Sianes, A., López-Montero, R. and Delgado-Baena, A. (2022). The Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda in the Design of Local Policies for Social Transformation in Disadvantaged Urban Areas. *Land*, *11*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/land11020197

Notes

1   As observed in fieldwork activities, women already play a significant role—not directly in the extractive process but prominently in the management and commercialisation of fisheries in both the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.

2   For further reference, see the final report of the "From Coast to Coast" project, funded by the CENTRA Foundation, under which this research was conducted.

Antonio Sianes

Antonio Sianes is the director of the Institute for Research in Policies for Social Transformation at Loyola Andalucía University, where he is a permanent lecturer of political science and public administration in the Department of International Studies. His research focuses on development studies, specialising in both the analysis of development policies within a global governance framework and policies aimed at social transformation.

Johana Herrera-Arango

Johana Herrera-Arango holds a PhD in inclusive and sustainable development as well as a master's degree in cultural studies and ecology. She is a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Environmental and Rural Studies at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. She currently serves as director of the Observatory of Ethnic and Peasant Territories. Her research experience includes socio-ecological systems, land tenure systems and artisanal fisheries in the Caribbean and Mediterranean, as well as ecological and cultural sustainability. Her publications focus on collective territorial rights, Afro-descendant communities, participatory GIS (geographic information systems) and sustainability in ecosystems such as tropical dry forests, humid forests, savannas, mangroves and coastal areas. She has extensive experience in intercultural dialogues with rural communities and ethno-territorial organisations for the management and planning of common resources.

Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez

Manuel Enrique Pérez-Martínez holds a PhD in territorial studies from the University of Caldas as well as a master's degree in planning and administration of regional development from CIDER, University of the Andes. He is a specialist in urban-rural rehabilitation and development at the Centre for Regional, Urban and Rural Studies in Rehovot, Israel and holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from the National University of Colombia. He is a permanent lecturer and researcher at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, where he currently serves as director of the Department of Rural and Regional Development within the Faculty of Environmental and Rural Studies. His research interests include territorial adaptation processes in urban-marginal and regional areas, emerging systems of land-use planning and territorial development, nature-based solutions for urban-rural contexts in response to climate change, agroecological transitions and local community organisation.

Laura Serrano

Laura Serrano holds a PhD in inclusive and sustainable development from Loyola Andalucía University, as well as a master's degree in economic development and

CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences
| January–June 2025 | vol. 4 | no. 1

Antonio Sianes, Johana Herrera-Arango, Manuel Enrique Pérez-
Martínez, Laura Serrano, Rocío Vela-Jiménez,
Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez and Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

sustainability from Pablo de Olavide University and the International University of Andalusia. She also has a master's degree in contemporary issues in human rights from Pablo de Olavide University, and a dual bachelor's degree in law and business administration from Pablo de Olavide University. She is currently a professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences at Loyola Andalucía University and a researcher in the university research group Social Matter. Her research focuses on the commodification of urban spaces, urban conflicts arising from the privatisation of public space, urban economics and the right to the city from a critical perspective.

Rocío Vela-Jiménez

Rocío Vela-Jiménez holds a PhD in inclusive and sustainable development, a master's degree in human rights, interculturality and development, and a bachelor's degree in social and cultural anthropology. Her professional career has centred on community social intervention and international development cooperation. Currently, she is a researcher and professor at Loyola Andalucía University, where she is part of the Department of Humanities and Philosophy and teaches in the Faculty of Communication and Arts. Her research focuses on strengthening local human development processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Andalusia through the territorial adaptation of policies and interventions.

Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez

Carmen Ana Castaños Gómez, a social and cultural anthropologist, served as external researcher for the project "From Coast to Coast: Socio-Ecological Challenges on the Coasts of Andalusia and the Caribbean in the Context of the 2030 Agenda" (CENTRA Foundation, PRY123/22). She has also collaborated on various studies on fishing communities along the Andalusian coast in partnership with researchers from the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Seville.

Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos

Juan Antonio Senent-De Frutos is a permanent lecturer in the Department of Humanities and Philosophy at Loyola Andalucía University. He is a coordinator and endorser of the governance and human rights for the construction of inclusive and sustainable societies research line within the PhD programme in inclusive and sustainable development at Loyola Andalucía University. In the field of intercultural studies, and in dialogue with sustainability challenges, he conducts research on the contributions of communities that maintain traditional ways of life to socio-ecological sustainability. Within this framework, he serves as the lead researcher of the project "From Coast to Coast: Socio-Ecological Challenges on the Coasts of Andalusia and the Caribbean in the Context of the 2030 Agenda" (CENTRA Foundation, PRY123/22).

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

Television and Political Polarisation in Spain and Andalusia. The Case of the 23 July General Election

Televisión y polarización política en España y Andalucía. El caso de las elecciones generales del 23-J

Paloma Egea-Cariñanos
University of Granada, Spain
palomaegeac@ugr.es

Daniel Bianchi
University of La Laguna, Spain
dbianchi@ull.edu.es

Mario Delgado-Lillo
University of Granada, Spain
mariodelgado@correo.ugr.es

ABSTRACT

Political polarisation has become, in recent times, one of the hottest topics within political science. However, there are still very few studies that address the phenomenon as applied to television and from a regional perspective. For that reason, the aim here is to compare political polarisation by television channel and political party, from an Andalusian perspective. The newscasts of five channels were recorded during the 23 July election campaign in Spain. We operationalised polarisation as an affective distance, calculated through sentiment analysis, and used ANOVA models to compare mean polarisation by channel and party. The results show more polarised media coverage of Vox and Sumar than that of PP and PSOE, although with some variation depending on the channel. We also found that the media coverage of the Andalusian regional channel presents more positive sentiments than the national channels.

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.102

RESUMEN

La polarización política es, en los últimos tiempos, uno de los grandes hot topics de la ciencia política. Sin embargo, aún son escasos los estudios que la abordan desde la televisión y con perspectiva regional. Por este motivo, se plantea como objetivo comparar la polarización política por cadena de televisión y por partido político, incorporando la perspectiva andaluza. Se capturaron los informativos de cinco cadenas durante la campaña de las elecciones del 23-J en España. Operacionalizamos la polarización como distancia afectiva, calculada mediante sentiment analysis, y estimamos modelos ANOVA para comparar las medias de polarización por cadenas y partidos. Los resultados muestran una cobertura mediática de Vox y Sumar más polarizada que la de PP y PSOE, aunque con variaciones por cadenas. También encontramos que la cobertura mediática de la cadena regional andaluza presenta sentimientos más positivos que las cadenas nacionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: polarizacion; elecciones generales; campañas electorales; partidos políticos; medios de comunicación; Andalucía.

1. Introduction

The concept of political polarisation bears a highly negative connotation, as it contributes to the centralisation of power (Lee, 2015), legislative stagnation (Jones, 2001) and high levels of hostility. In both Spain and Andalusia, the high levels of polarisation detected have been attributed to factors such as the emergence of populist groupings and discourses, the substantial transformation of the party system (with greater levels of fragmentation and ideological distancing), territorial tensions, or the recent COVID-19 crisis (Barreda, 2021; Torcal and Comelles, 2020). At the same time, previous studies show that certain issues, such as immigration and taxation, are more sensitive to polarisation (Miller, 2021).

The media is a space for political confrontation and provides frameworks for interpreting democracy and its effects (Cazorla *et al.*, 2022). Media outlets act as intensifiers and emitters of emotions that the population processes and takes into account when deciding their electoral behaviour, providing news programmes or journalists with sufficient social authority to reproduce specific ideologies and social positions (Ericson *et al.*, 1987). Specifically, through an intentional strategy involving *priming* and *framing*, media outlets encourage the public to accept certain ways of categorising reality as natural and obvious (Hall *et al.*, 1978) and represent a crucial framework for the development of collective emotions (Rivera *et al.*, 2021). Due to this role in generating public opinion, media outlets are perceived as the main polarising agents (Masip *et al.*, 2020).

We know that polarisation is related to the particular characteristics of each media company (Waisbord, 2020). Recent studies hold some conservative media outlets responsible for viral coverage of far-right activities in several countries, thereby increasing viewer extremism, whether for or against. The Fox News channel in the

United States (Peck, 2019) and similar media outlets in Eastern Europe, both public and controlled by their populist leaders (Szabó *et al.*, 2019), are examples of the relationship between media outlets, parties and political polarisation.

This ideologically biased media coverage reaches its full splendour when elections are called. For this reason, the electoral campaign period is the most suitable for the study and measurement of political polarisation (Hernández *et al.*, 2021). Even if the limits of their duration seem to be blurring (Blumenthal, 1980), we must not disregard the crucial relevance of "real" electoral campaigns in the process of electing representatives. It is during an electoral campaign that greater effort and resources are invested in mobilising the electorate (ACE, 2024), greater political content floods the media outlets and the discursive proximity or distance of parties and candidates can be better assessed (Caramelo-Pérez, 2020).

This led to thoughts about the levels of polarisation on television during the electoral campaign in Spain and Andalusia, involving a comparison of channels with respect to their treatment of political parties. This implies asking which parties suffer from more polarised television coverage during the election campaign and whether there are differences depending on the channel. As a hypothesis, we propose that Vox and Sumar, at the extremes of the ideological spectrum, show greater polarisation regarding their coverage than the traditional parties (H1). In turn, we expect to find differences in the levels of polarisation in the coverage of each party based on the television channel (H2).

While there are relatively many studies on the relationship between political polarisation and the media outlet system, there remain few that address this issue within a regional context. This research thus aims to provide a comparative view of polarisation in Spain and Andalusia, focusing on the electoral campaign for the general elections of 23 July 2023 (7 to 21 July). This research seeks to achieve the general aim of measuring the political polarisation generated by the main Spanish and Andalusian television channels during their coverage of the activities of political parties during the latest electoral campaign.

This intention is broken down into the specific objectives of:

1. Identifying if there are differences by channel in their levels of polarisation.

2. Recognising which parties have more polarised media coverage.

3. Comparing the polarisation levels per party on each of the channels.

2. Political polarisation in the media coverage of campaigns

2.1. Political polarisation

Political polarisation refers to the generation of extreme political positions that lead to growing hostility between different factions (Layman *et al.*, 2006) and a lack of consensus (Mutz, 2006). The various options that represent the interests of the governed move apart in such a way that their beliefs or opinions are irreconcilable and the legislative task becomes unsustainable, resulting in a truly fragmented political landscape. This fragmentation is not restricted to parliamentary institutions, unable to find points of consensus. It also refers to public opinion on political-social issues, in which citizens are grouped in diametrically opposed positions on the ideological spectrum (Phillips, 2022). Through this, polarisation leads to the strengthening of the poles of the political spectrum and the separation of the ideological centre (Corrales, 2005).

Binder (2015) sees in political polarisation a real obstacle to the common development of democratic society, since the lack of cooperation and consensus between the government and the opposition, and within society in general, makes decision-making difficult and less representative. The 3rd National Survey of Affective Polarisation conducted by CEMOP (2023) shows that those interviewed demonstrating high levels of emotional polarisation tend to favour the reversal of certain democratic norms more than those less polarised. In most cases, respondents consider it preferable to have strong leaders who make firm decisions, even if this involves altering the usual democratic processes (Melero *et al.*, 2023). However, according to Wagner (2021), certain levels of polarisation also lead to increased levels of political and electoral participation and greater political culturalisation.

The origin of this polarisation is controversial. Some authors point to structural factors, such as the electoral system, radical right-wing populist ideologies[1] and partisan dynamics (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), while others focus on factors linked to the activities of the media outlets (Sunstein, 2009).

2.2. Media polarisation

Media polarisation can be interpreted as ideologically biased and divergent media outlet coverage (Fletcher and Jenkins, 2019). Authors such as Prior (2013) assert that media outlets do not have polarising effects on consumers, since in exercising their freedom of information they choose the media outlets they wish to consume. In contrast, it is argued that media outlets such as television have increased polarisation, since, by enabling individuals to select channels that fit their pre-existing ideology, the media outlet acts as an echo chamber (Bishop, 2008; Sunstein, 2009).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) define the Spanish media system as polarised pluralist, insofar as the net of media outlets and party interests in Spain is frequently inter-twined. According to the authors, this confusion of interests is due to the fact that the journalistic profession is scarcely professionalised and that the state intervenes to a high degree in the configuration of the media system through licenses and the imposition of editorial guidelines. González (2008) considers that parties in Spain are highly linked to the press, leading to the phenomenon of parallelism between media outlets and politics (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

In addition, Manin's (1998) classic conceptualisation places Spain at an intermediate point between the models of party democracy and audience democracy, due to the close link between journalistic practice and the conflicting partisan interests of the media outlets. It seems that *non-partisanship is not a goal for the media outlets, but quite the opposite* (Castromil and Chavero, 2012).

Putting this in perspective, the Pew Research Center (2018) describes the Span-ish transition from a relatively stable and non-polarised political climate to an antagonistic scenario of constant polarisation, largely due to the increase in the use of social media and the evolution towards the warmongering language used by most traditional communication channels (Berrocal-Gonzalo *et al.*, 2023). Both situations mean that, according to CEMOP measurements (Crespo, 2023), affective polarisation in Spain has increased from 3.98 points (out of 10) in 2021 to 4.56 in 2023.

This increase in the political polarisation of Spanish society, resulting from the me-diatisation of news channels (Orriols, 2021), is also favoured by the overexposure, directly or indirectly, of citizens to certain political content and television channels and by the way in which they approach their audiences.

An essential element in the study of political polarisation promoted by the media outlets is audience segmentation (Napoli, 2021). Fragmentation is the process of dividing an audience into smaller groups that have similar characteristics, such as political beliefs or age, among others (Napoli, 2021). As a result of the de-velopment of new communication channels and the personalisation of content, new tools have emerged to attract viewers. The "filter bubbles", responsible for showing the user content in line with their beliefs in order to create a climate of security (Pariser, 2011), lead to "echo chambers", where similar opinions are reinforced and divergent perspectives are excluded (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016), thus reinforcing pre-existing values without leaving room for reflection and a con-trast of ideas. However, this process is not unrelated to individual action. Citi-zens know the leanings of each information channel and its position on matters of interest (Rodríguez and Castromil, 2010), so it is very difficult to determine what happens first: an *agenda setting* and a biased *framing/priming* or the citi-zen's predisposition to receive self-reinforcing *inputs* based on their own point of view. A kind of paradox is thus constructed, since citizens consider the media

system as biased and with leanings, but at the same time they are reluctant to turn to information channels with editorial lines which differ from their own value systems, thus imposing selective exposure.

Within the Andalusian context, the Audiovisual Barometer of Andalusia (CAA, 2022) includes an assessment of the population in the territory on the scale (0 = none and 10 = a lot) of information impartiality and political pluralism within the media outlets. Its results are not very encouraging: none of the media outlets (television, radio and the Internet) receives the approval of the Andalusian population, with the Internet achieving the best result (4.9), followed by radio (4.2), with television rounding out the classification, with an average of 3.9. Some 52% of the Andalusian population believes that television is not impartial. In general, the majority of respondents consider that the audiovisual media outlets analysed (television, radio and the Internet) lack impartiality.

Despite this mistrust and the progressive increase in those who receive their information via social media, television is still the predominant option among Spaniards for finding out about political news, being selected by 76% of them, compared to 35% who select *online* platforms, according to the Eurobarometer Media & News Survey (2022). This *telecracy* (Sartori, 1999) alludes to the fact that television conditions the electoral process, whether through the elevation or marginalisation of candidates, in the discourse selected to report on the campaign, or in the positioning of each news item within the newscast. In addition, it is in television where there is a greater ideological load in the coverage of the campaigns (Horwitz, 2007; McChesney, 1999), a more negative treatment of the news (Dunaway, 2013) and greater efforts to connect with the viewer through the reinforcement of pre-existing attitudes and beliefs (Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Iyengar *et al.*, 2012).

2.3. Polarisation, television and electoral campaigns

This binomial between parties and the media outlets has its maximum expression when elections are called. It is during the electoral campaigns when media efforts in the coverage of partisan events are seen to a greater extent. Some common dynamics in the media treatment of campaigns are an increase in personalisation, a gradual growth of negativism and a trend towards increasingly[2] interpretive coverage focused on a competition format similar to that of a horse race (Luengo, 2011; Reinemann and Wilke, 2007). All of the above leads to the provision of a political-ideological perspective to the detriment of others (Entman, 1993).

One of the main difficulties in conceptualising campaigns is their limited duration. Since its popularisation by Blumenthal (1980), the idea of the permanent campaign seems to be globally accepted: that which is subject to the strenuous logic of the majority on a daily basis and in which the obsession to publicise party achievements (or vices) far exceeds the electoral campaign.

Another relevant aspect to analyse in relation to the electoral campaign is the theory of the minimum effects of campaigns, through which voters reinforce their preferences and their pre-existing disagreements with the various parties. In addition, there is the theory of the social identity of polarisation between internal and external groups, which suggests that, in media contexts involving negative coverage, the extremisation of positions is further accentuated (Hansen and Kosiara-Persen, 2017). Political polarisation, in this sense, is reinforced by providing partial information, accentuating ideology in the news narrative and affecting the perception and decisions of voters by adopting more extremist positions (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). The fragmentation of audiences linked to sensationalism and media bias is a factor that affects the quality of public debate and democratic decision-making (Mutz, 2006). In short, the relationship between the media and political polarisation during electoral campaigns seems more than direct.

3. Methodology

The data used for the analysis come from the second-edition newscasts of the television channels with the largest audience at the national level (TVE, Antena 3, Telecinco and La Sexta), together with Canal Sur, in order to provide data at the Andalusian level, during the period of the electoral campaign (7 to 21 July) of the general elections held on 23 July 2023 in Spain. The collected material was labelled and broken down by news item, thus obtaining the individualised unit of analysis.

The video was transcribed into text using Whisper open source software, a machine learning model for speech recognition and transcription. All campaign news mentioning any of the four main parties, according to parliamentary representation in the 2023 general elections (PSOE, PP, Vox and Sumar), or their national or regional leaders, were noted.

Next, we performed a *sentiment analysis*, a text analysis technique framed in natural language processing (NLP)[3]. It is an automatic technique based on algorithms, and has been validated by previous studies that cite it as suitable for the analysis of large amounts of text (Serrano-Contreras *et al.*, 2020, 2021; Luengo *et al.*, 2021). The tool used *was* sentimentr (Rinker, 2022), which, compared to other sentiment analysis software, has the advantage of taking into account the context when estimating polarity by considering *valence shifters* (Rinker, 2022). An example of how it works can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Example of how sentiment analysis works with "sentimentr"

						Sentiment
1	The	economy	is going	well		1.00
	0	0	0	2		
2	The	economy	is going	badly		-1.00
	0	0	0	-2		
3	The	economy	is not going		well	-0.89
	0	0	(-)	0	2	
4	The	economy	is going	very	well	1.61
	0	0	0	>	2	
5	The	economy	is going	quite	well	0.18
	0	0	0	<	2	

(–) *Negator:* Reverses polarity.

(>) *Amplifier*: Increases the impact of the PW.

(<) *Deamplifier:* Reduces the impact of the PW.

PW: polarised word.

Source: own research based on Rinker (2022).

In all the examples in Table 1, "well" and "badly" are the words that contain the polarity (*polarised word*). But in examples 3, 4 and 5, the *polarised word* is accompanied by a *valence shifter*: a negator (3), an amplifier (4) and a deamplifier (5). Table 1 shows how the polarity of the sentence is modified depending on the presence of these modifiers. A more detailed explanation can be found in Rinker (2022).

After calculating the sentiment value at the phrase level, we add the phrases to the story mentioning the party—or one of its leaders—and calculate the mean sentiment. Thus, each news item can have different sentiment values for each party, since the mean is calculated by adding the news items that mention the various parties. In total, we have 377 unique news stories and 673 news snippets mentioning any of the parties (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of the news captured by party and media outlet and descriptive of sentiment

	N news stories*	News stories by day	N news snippets**	Sentiment		
				Mean	SD	Median
Total	377	22.18	673	-0.08	0.28	-0.08
Channel						
Antena 3	109	7.27	200	-0.08	0.26	-0.08
Canal Sur	47	2.76	68	0.04	0.35	-0.04
La Sexta	80	4.71	147	-0.08	0.27	-0.07
TVE	79	4.65	141	-0.10	0.24	-0.09
Telecinco	62	3.65	117	-0.15	0.29	-0.09
Party						
PSOE	260	15.29	260	0.05	0.47	0.09
PP	268	15.76	268	0.01	0.40	0.03
Vox	173	10.18	173	0.02	0.47	-0.02
Sumar	86	5.06	86	0.12	0.77	0.14

* News stories: total news stories mentioning any of the parties.

** News snippets: news snippets mentioning each party.

Source: own research.

We understand media polarisation as affective distance. For its operationalisation, we followed the methodology proposed by Serrano-Contreras *et al.* (2020, 2021), taking the degree of polarisation in a news item as *the absolute value of the distance between the value of the sentiment of that news item and the median sentiment of all news items*:

$$P_{ij} = |S_{ij} - Me|,$$

where P_{ij} is the polarisation level of the news item *i* for party *j*, S_{ij} is the sentiment value of the news item *i* for party *j*, and Me is the median of the sentiment value over the total news item. S_{ij} takes values between -1 (Most Negative Sentiment) and +1 (Most Positive Sentiment) according to the sentiment value of each news item. P_{ij} takes values between 0 (absence of polarisation) and +200 (maximum polarisation). takes values between 0 (absence of polarisation) and +200 (maximum polarisation).

Using this scale, we will compare the levels of polarisation in the media coverage of the election campaign by channel and party using one- and two-factor ANOVA models. The ANOVA models allow us to contrast the null hypothesis of media equality using a metric dependent variable (polarisation) between the various groups of one or more explanatory variables or factors (parties, channels). Through *post-hoc* testing, we will perform pairwise comparisons to identify which groups differ from each other, using Tamhane's T2 statistic for heterogeneous variances.

4. Results: polarisation in media coverage of the main parties

Below are the results of the analysis of polarisation by party and television channel during the 2023 general election campaign. The descriptive statistics of the polarisation measurement, as well as the sentiment values on which it is calculated, can be found in Annex 1.

4.1. Polarisation by channel

Analysis of polarisation by channel shows no significant differences in levels of affective polarisation. Only Canal Sur obtains polarisation levels that seem to be significantly higher than the rest of the channels (Figure 1), although these differences are not statistically significant (Table 3). Subsequent analyses show that this apparent—albeit not significant—greater polarisation of Canal Sur could be attributed to 25% higher news (upper quartile of sentiment) with a much more positive sentiment value than we find with the rest of the channels: the national channels place their 75th percentile of sentiment at around 0.01, while this value in the sentiment distribution for Canal Sur stands at 0.22 (Annex 1, Table 2). Telecinco, despite having a level of polarisation close to the mean, also has very polarising news in its coverage of the parties during the campaign, especially from the 90th percentile onward (Annex 1, Table 1), which, unlike Canal Sur, would be attributable to 10% of news with very negative sentiment (−0.59 in p10 of sentiment, compared to −0.38 around which the rest of the channels oscillate) (Annex 1, Table 2).

Figure 1
Polarisation means by channel
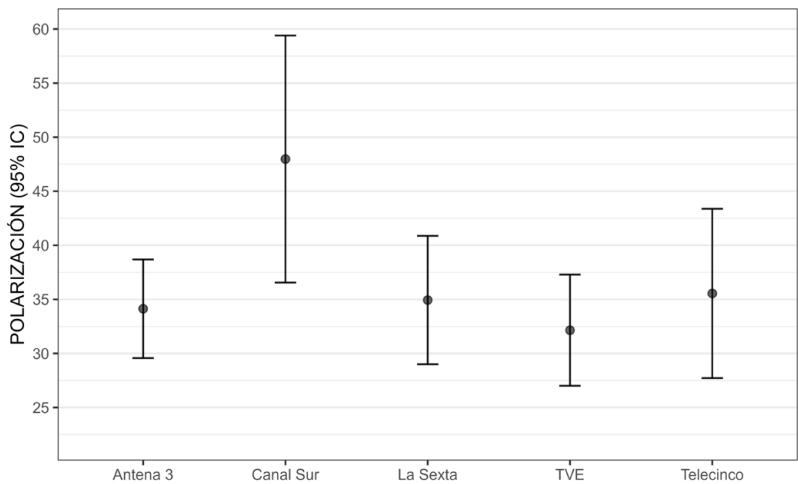
Source: own research.

Table 3

Comparison of means of polarisation levels of Canal Sur and national channels during the 2023 general election campaign

Multiple comparisons (Tamhane's T2)						
Dependent variable: POLARISATION						
(I) Media outlet	(J) Media outlet	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Canal Sur	Antena 3	13.841	6.277	0.263	-4.176	31.859
	La Sexta	13.039	6.569	0.400	-5.749	31.827
	TVE	15.827	6.392	0.141	-2.494	34.148
	Telecinco	12.431	7.067	0.570	-7.700	32.561

The Mean Difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: own research.

4.2. Polarisation by party

By party, we find considerable differences between the bipartisan bloc (PP and PSOE) and the most recent groupings (Vox and Sumar). Vox and Sumar showed greater polarisation in their media coverage during the campaign period (Figure 2). The comparison of ANOVA means shows marginally significant differences ($p < 0.1$) in the polarisation levels of Vox coverage with respect to PP ($p = 0.07$) and Sumar with PP ($p = 0.06$), although the 95% confidence intervals, with the upper limit very close to 0, show an indication of the greater polarisation in the media coverage of Sumar and Vox (Table 4).

Sumar is the party with the highest mean polarisation (45.3) and also with the highest variability in polarisation levels in its media coverage (SD = 44.6) (Annex 2, Table 1). It is followed by Vox, with a high polarisation (40.3) in its coverage, although with lower variability (SD = 38.2). When we look at the distribution of the news that mentions each party by level of polarisation, we see, at the upper end of the distribution, that the most polarising news stories about Vox and Sumar are much higher than those that mention PP or PSOE. This occurs from the median (located around 30 points for Sumar and Vox, compared to 22 points for PSOE and 17 points for PP), and particularly from the 75th percentile onward (66 points for Sumar and 53 points for Vox, compared to 44 points for PSOE and 42 points for PP) (Annex 2, Table 1).

Sentiment distributions help us identify where the sentiment expressed in the media coverage of each party lies farther from the median. We see that these polarisation values could be attributed to the presence of more negative sentiments in the coverage of Vox and Sumar, with sentiment means of -0.15 and -0.11, respectively, compared to -0.05 for PSOE and PP.

The position of the first quartile of sentiment of the Sumar and Vox coverage (−0.29 for both) also lies further from the first quartile of PSOE (−0.22) and PP (−0.17), and more clearly in the first decile (−0.50 for Sumar and Vox, and −0.31 for PSOE and PP). This lower sentiment value in Vox's coverage is maintained throughout the distribution (Annex 2, Table 2), indicating that its levels of polarisation would be attributable to the presence of more negative sentiments in its media coverage.

Figure 2

Polarisation means by party
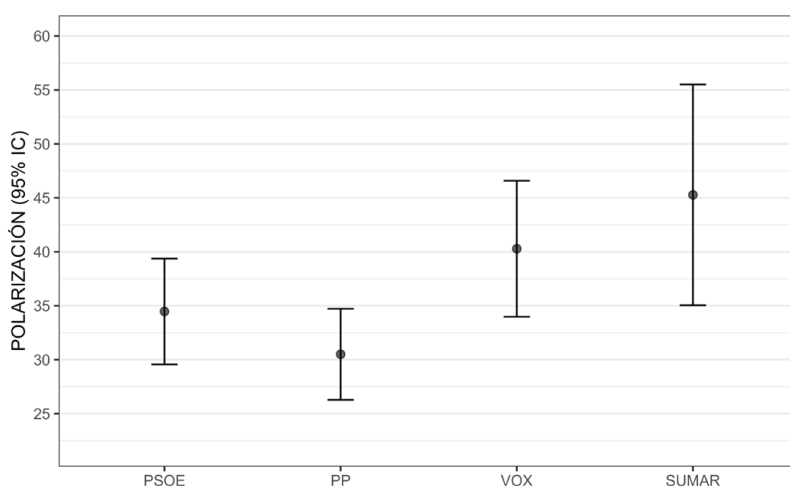
Source: own research.

We also found greater variability in the levels of sentiment in the media coverage of Vox and Sumar, especially in the case of Sumar (SD-Vox = 0.29; SD-Sumar = 0.34), a party that stands out through its news coverage with more negative sentiments (p10), but also at the opposite end of the distribution, in its news coverage with more positive sentiments (p90-Sumar = 0.32; p90-Total = 0.24) (Annex 2, Table 2). Therefore, the tendency of Vox and Sumar to present more negative sentiment values in their media coverage than PP and PSOE is only partially reversed from the 90th percentile, where Sumar becomes the party with the highest sentiment value among the 10% of most positive news, followed by PSOE, and at a distance from PP and Vox, which reach less favourable values at the upper end of their sentiment distributions.

Table 4

Comparison of means of polarisation levels in media coverage by party during the 2023 general election campaign

Multiple comparisons (Tamhane's T2)

Dependent variable: POLARISATION

(I) Party	(J) Party	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
PP	PSOE	-3.966	3.300	0.792	-12.689	4.757
	Sumar	-14.773	5.647	0.060	-29.937	0.392
	Vox	-9.777	3.869	0.070	-20.030	0.476
PSOE	PP	3.966	3.300	0.792	-4.757	12.689
	Sumar	-10.807	5.789	0.330	-26.324	4.710
	Vox	-5.811	4.073	0.635	-16.597	4.974
Sumar	PP	14.773	5.647	0.060	-0.392	29.937
	PSOE	10.807	5.789	0.330	-4.710	26.324
	Vox	4.996	6.131	0.961	-11.387	21.379
Vox	PP	9.777	3.869	0.070	-0.476	20.030
	PSOE	5.811	4.073	0.635	-4.974	16.597
	Sumar	-4.996	6.131	0.961	-21.379	11.387

The Mean Difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: own research.

4.3. Polarisation by channel and party

The comparison of the coverage of each party by channel shows some differences in their levels of polarisation, particularly between the two parties with the greatest polarisation in their media coverage (Figure 3). Vox is the party that presents the most polarisation on La Sexta, while Sumar receives more polarised coverage on Antena 3 and Telecinco, where Vox also experiences more polarisation in its coverage than the bipartisan parties, but to a lesser extent than Sumar. The polarisation levels of Sumar and Vox coverage do not seem to differ from those of PSOE and PP coverage on La Sexta and TVE.

We used a two-way ANOVA model to demonstrate the existence of these differences. When we simultaneously consider the polarisation means by channel and party, we find significant differences ($p < 0.05$) both between channels and between parties (Table 5). The pairwise comparisons (Annex 3, Table 1) allow us to confirm most of the differences that we observed in Figure 3. On Antena 3, Sumar suffers significantly more polarised coverage than PP and PSOE ($p < 0.05$), and Vox obtains greater polarisation in its coverage than PP, although this is only marginally significant ($p < 0.1$). On Telecinco, Sumar also experiences significantly more polarised media coverage than PP and PSOE ($p < 0.05$), while we cannot affirm that the level of polarisation in Vox's coverage is higher than that of other parties on the same channel. On La Sexta,

on the other hand, Vox receives significantly more polarised coverage ($p < 0.05$) than PP, while on this channel the treatment of Sumar does not differ significantly in its mean polarisation from the rest of the parties.

On Canal Sur, although there is a high mean value in polarisation in the coverage of Sumar, its low N, appreciable in its broader confidence interval, does not allow us to compare it with other parties on this channel. We found no significant differences between the rest of the parties on Canal Sur. On TVE, we also did not find statistically significant differences in party polarisation means.

In short, the three private broadcasters (Telecinco, Antena 3 and La Sexta) have significant differences in the polarisation means between parties—specifically, between Vox and Sumar on the one hand, and PP and PSOE on the other—while we cannot confirm the existence of these differences for the public broadcasters.

The distribution by polarisation levels of the news mentioning each party on each channel is suitable for comparing means (Annex 4, Table 1). On Antena 3, Sumar's coverage has 25% (p75 = 74.7) and, above all, 10% (p90 = 145.8) of highly polarising news. On Telecinco, the greatest polarisation in the coverage of Sumar—compared to traditional parties—occurs throughout the distribution, with polarisation values already higher than the rest of the parties by the first decile (p10 = 7.8), and until the last decile, where Vox becomes the party that has the 10% most polarising news in its coverage (p90-Sumar = 125.9; p90-Vox = 144.1).

Figure 3

Polarisation by party and channel
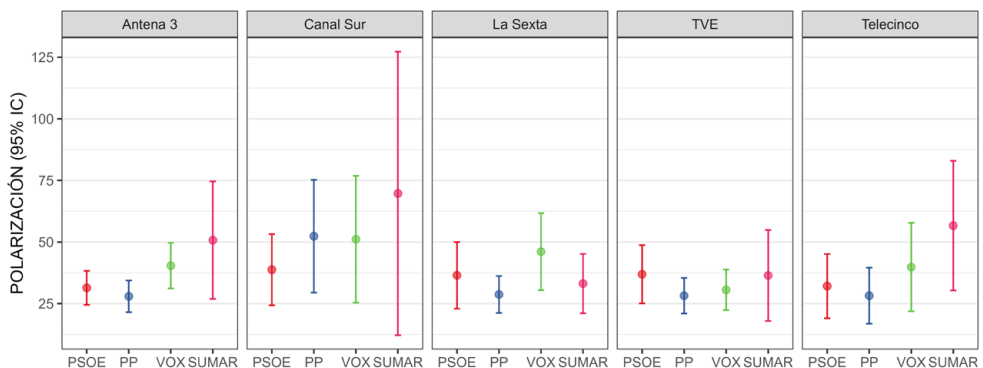
Source: own research.

Table 5

Two-way ANOVA polarisation by party and channel

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent variable: POLARISATION

Origin	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial eta squared	Non-centrality parameter	Observed power [b]
Corrected model	44,981.272	19	2,367.435	1.742	0.026	0.048	33.096	0.965
Intersection	709,789.387	1	709,789.387	522.246	0.000	0.444	522.246	1.000
Party	15,056.491	3	5,018.830	3.693	0.012	0.017	11.078	0.804
Channel	13,495.849	4	3,373.962	2.482	0.043	0.015	9.930	0.709
Party*Channel	15,372.112	12	1,281.009	0.943	0.503	0.017	11.310	0.560
Error	887,498.622	653	1,359.110					
Total	1,782,338.249	673						
Corrected total	932,479.894	672						

[b] Calculated using alpha = 0.05.

Source: own research.

On Antena 3 and Telecinco, both Sumar and Voxamass10% (p10) of news with very negative levels of sentiment compared to traditional parties (Annex 4, Table 2). Vox maintains this lower sentiment value in its coverage throughout the distribution on both channels. In the case of Sumar, Antena 3 shows news with more positive sentiment values than for the rest of the matches from the 75th percentile, and particularly from the 90th percentile, although the tendency, as on Telecinco, is to present more negative sentiments in most of the distribution. On La Sexta, Vox is the party with the most negative mean levels of sentiment in its coverage (–0.16), with lower sentiment values than the rest of the parties in 75% of news. The possible factors involved in these trends will be discussed in the following section.

5. Discussion and conclusion

At a time when research on polarisation is increasingly focused on *online* debate (Waisbord, 2020), our results show the role that television continues to play in polarisation during electoral campaigns.

In the relationship between television channels and political polarisation, as indicated at the beginning of this article, the mediation of the main adjectives of contemporary political coverage is fundamental: infotainment, sensationalism and personalism (Maier and Nai, 2020). On the regional channels, these phenomena are also recognisable. However, our results point to indications of less conflict than in state media outlets. A comparative study between the political coverage of regional channels in Germany and the United States (Ellger *et al.*, 2021) links the decreasing presence (and therefore voter exposure) of local news with the increase in negative

political polarisation in multi-party systems. Its main contribution lies in verifying that the percentage of the vote that goes to small parties, which tend to maintain positions further away from the ideological centre, increases after the reduction in the *share* of local news. In addition, the authors identify a strong correlation between voting for centrist parties and the consumption of local news (Ellger *et al.*, 2021). Delving deeper into the above, Darr *et al.* (2018) state that local news reports are related to a more consensual approach to politics, while the national media outlets are more ideological.

Next, and regardless of its geographical scope, we wondered if the political ideology of each television channel is somehow linked to the polarisation of its news. To categorise television channels according to the left-right axis, we follow the proposal of Ramírez-Dueñas and Humanes (2023), who build a three-point scale for each media outlet based on the position of its followers on the ideological self-positioning scale reported to the CIS. The resulting axis includes the scores of -1 = progressive, 0 = neutral and 1 = conservative. Thus, RTVE and Telecinco are considered neutral (value 0), Antena 3 conservative (1) and La Sexta progressive (-1). Once the media outlets have been categorised, we must recognise that with regards to Spain, sufficient scientific evidence has not been found that correlates a conservative worldview of the specific media outlet with greater political polarisation. In fact, for the campaign analysed, it is a channel categorised as ideologically neutral (Telecinco) in which we noted more negative sentiments in its treatment of political news.

However, there is extensive literature reinforcing the relationship between polarisation and conservatism in the United States. Authors such as DiMaggio (2019), Garrett *et al.* (2019) and Chalif (2011) have shown that, systematically, the Fox News channel provides news from the perspective of extremism. As a direct consequence of this polarisation away from conservatism, Chalif (2011) denounces the oversizing of echo chambers, in which the more polarised the coverage, the greater the demand for self-referential news by the viewer/voter. In addition, the use of various media outlets as a source of news has also been linked to polarisation, with conservatives more likely to use traditional media outlets and liberals more likely to use social media (Hawdon *et al.*, 2020). In Eastern European countries, according to Szabó *et al.* (2019), an even more perverse relationship occurs, as it is the ultraconservative populist leaders themselves who dominate television channels, which they use for their own personal exaltation and to insult their enemies.

Now that we have recognised the profile of polarisation in state and conservative media outlets, it is time to divert our attention to the parties that suffer from a more ideologically charged coverage. Our results pointed to a more polarised coverage of the parties that break away from bipartisanship than of the traditional groupings. In Spain, according to Orriols (2021), the levels of polarisation increased considerably at the time of the emergence on the political landscape of populist groupings ideologically located at the extremes (Vox and Sumar). These parties not only extend the left and right extremes of the party system, but also the axis of citizens' affections and information on politics (Mudde *et al.*, 2018). According to these same authors,

populism and polarisation are related insofar as populist parties arise as a reaction to the exhaustion of the centripetal consensus with the goal of repolarising the political conflict. Regardless of the populist connotations, Torcal (2020) also recognises greater levels of polarisation among the Podemos and Vox electorate. These results are consistent with our research, since Vox and Sumar are the ones with the highest levels of polarisation and their media coverage contains more negative sentiment values compared to traditional parties.

Finally, we asked ourselves whether or not, in conjunction with all the above, the media coverage of the activities of a given grouping depended on the affinity between the political colours of the editorial line and the party. In this regard, the specialised literature is broad and firm in its endorsement of our results. According to Ramírez-Dueñas and Humanes (2023), the political position of each media outlet, or the exercise of a militant role in the political coverage of each television channel, is closely related to political polarisation. Levenduski (2013) also showed that the partisan media outlets polarise the electorate, making citizens more extreme than before, to a greater or lesser extent.

Using these general assertions with respect to the situation in Spain, Pop *et al.* (2023) analyse the role that the various television channels give to the political leaders who are candidates for the presidency of the Government in the two elections of 2019. And they discover strong links between the editorial ideology and that of the groupings. In the case of TVE's Telediario 2 (also analysed in this research), the pre-eminence of the figure of the socialist candidate Pedro Sánchez was much higher than that of Pablo Casado, with the former appearing in 85% of the news items on his party's campaign, with the latter at 78%. In the Atresmedia group, however, Casado reached 100% of the space covered by his party's campaign for the November elections, while Sánchez was cited on only 60% of the occasions in which PSOE's strategy was mentioned. Also in Atresmedia, between the April and November 2019 elections, the leaders of the other parties suffered a 31% decrease in their coverage when their parties were talked about, going from 82% in the April elections to 52% in November. The editorial profile of the channel closest to the right and aimed at a centre and centre-right audience could be behind these types of results (Pop *et al.*, 2023).

Given our results, we have not been able to confirm that the channels present differences in their levels of polarisation or sentiment based on their ideology, as they have been categorised by previous studies. We do find, however, that the ideology of the editorial line could be associated with the values of sentiment and polarisation of the parties in their media coverage. We also recognise more positive coverage in regional broadcasters versus national broadcasters, as the latter have more negative sentiment means.

Finally, we must point out some limitations of both the concept of affective polarisation and its operationalisation in this work. Some criticisms highlight the complexity of delimiting polarisation in multi-party systems (Röllicke, 2023) or the need to distinguish individual and institutional factors from affective polarisation

(Romero-Martín *et al.*, 2024). In this research, we have assumed that the affective polarisation on the television channels analysed resides in the media treatment of information, to subsequently focus on identifying the differences between these levels of polarisation by channel, by party and by party within each channel. Under this assumption, we have not been able to address the discussion on the agents of polarisation—who generates polarisation—an issue that could be revisited in future research using appropriate data.

As a main limitation to this study, we recognise the difficulty of asserting conclusions following the analysis of media polarisation during a single electoral campaign. It would have been interesting to compare our results longitudinally between different elections, increasing the sample of news items covered. However, the availability of material on the TV channels' web servers is limited. With a broader database, even the most under-represented parties could be considered, including regional parties, some of which may be susceptible to even greater media polarisation. It would also be interesting to delve into the specific issues that could be covered in a polarising manner, beyond the limited context of electoral campaigns. In this regard, future research could address the sensitivity to media polarisation of certain key issues within the social debate. Recent studies have already addressed some of these issues by exploiting texts from the *online* debate (Serrano-Contreras *et al.*, 2020; Moreno-Mercado *et al.*, 2022) and the written press (Serrano-Contreras *et al.*, 2021). Automatic text transcription tools such as the one used in this work open a path towards addressing the generation of polarisation in audiovisual media outlets. In any event, we can affirm that this study will be continued through future research, which has already been designed focusing on the analysis of polarisation during the campaign in the press and on the various radio stations, both in their news programme sections and in their political discussions.

6. Acknowledgements

7. Bibliography

ACE [Red de Conocimientos Electorales] (2024). *Campaña electoral.* https://aceproject.org/main/espanol/ei/eie09.htm

Barreda, M. (2021). La polarización política en las democracias actuales: expresiones y consecuencias. *Cuadernos Manuel Giménez Abad, 21.* https://doi.org/10.47919/FMGA.CM21.0109

Berrocal-Gonzalo, S., Waisbord, S. and Gómez-García, S. (2023). Polarización política y medios de comunicación, su impacto en la democracia y en la sociedad. *El Profesional de la información, 32*(6). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2023.nov.22

Binder, S. (2015). The Dysfunctional Congress. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *18*(1), 85-101. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-110813-032156

Bishop, B. (2008). *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Blumenthal, S. (1980). *The permanente campaign. Inside the world of elite political operatives.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Caramelo-Pérez, L. M. (2020). Análisis del discurso emocional de Donald Trump en la campaña electoral de 2016. Ámbitos. *Revista Internacional de Comunicación, 47*, 267-287. https://doi.org/10.12795/ambitos.2020.i47.13

Castromil, R. and Chavero, P. (2012). Polarización política y negativismo mediático. Similitudes y diferencias en la prensa de derecha y en la de izquierda en las elecciones autonómicas y municipales de 2011. *Redmarka-CIECID, 8*, 55-81. cienciared.com.ar/ra/doc.php?n=1655

Cazorla, A., Montabes, J. and López-López, P. C. (2022). Medios de comunicación, información política y emociones hacia partidos políticos en España. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política, 58*, 83-109. https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.58.03

CEMOP (2023). *III Encuesta Nacional de Polarización Afectiva.* Universidad de Murcia. https://www.cemopmurcia.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/III-Encuesta-Nacional-Polarizacion-Politica-cemop.pdf

Chalif, R. (2011). *Political media fragmentation: echo chambers in cable news.* Washington DC: Georgetown Repository. https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/552906/chalifRebecca.pdf;sequence=1

Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucía (2022). *Barómetro Audiovisual de Andalucía.* Junta de Andalucía.

Corrales, J. (2005). In search of a theory of polarization: Lessons from Venezuela, 1999-2005. *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 79, 105-118. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25676187

Crespo, I. (2023). Introducción. In *III Encuesta Nacional de Polarización Política.* CEMOP. Grupo de Investigación de la Universidad de Murcia.

Darr, J., Hitt, M. and Dunaway. J. (2018). Newspaper Closures Polarize Voting Behavior. *Journal of Communication, 68*(6), 1007-1028. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy051

DiMaggio, A. (2019). Slanting the News: Media Bias and Its Effects. In A. Nadler y A. J. Bauer (Eds.), *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures.* Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190913540.003.0011

Dunaway, J. (2013). Media ownership and story tone in campaign news. *American Politics Research*, 41, 24-53. doi: 10.1177/1532673X12454564

Ellger, F., Hilbig, H., Riaz, S. and Tillmann, P. (2021). Local Newspaper Decline and Political Polarization – Evidence from a Multi-Party Setting. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/nhwxs

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Northwestern University Journal of Communication*, 43, 51-58.

Ericson, R., Baranek, P. and Chan, J. (1987). *Visualizing Deviance: a study of news organization.* University of Toronto Press.

Eurobarómetro (2022). *Encuesta de Medios y Noticias 2022.* Parlamento Europeo.

Flaxman, S., Goel, S. and Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *80*(1), 298-320. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006

Fletcher, R. and Jenkins, J. (2019). *Polarisation and the News Media in Europe.* Brussels: EPRS.

Garret, K., Long, J. and Seon, M. (2019). From Partisan Media to Misperception: Affective Polarization as Mediator. *Journal of Communication, 69*(5), 490-512. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqz028

Gentzkow, M. and Shapiro, J. (2010). What Drives Media Slant? Evidence From U.S. Daily Newspapers. *Econometrica*, *78*(1), 35-71. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA7195

González, J. J. (2008). Los medios en la democracia avanzada. ¿Hacia una democracia de audiencia? In J. J. González y M. Requena (Eds.), *Tres décadas de cambio social en España* (2ª ed.). Madrid: Alianza.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T. and Clarke, J. N. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order (Critical social studies).* Holmes and Meier.

Hallin, D. C. and Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics.* Cambridge University Press.

Hansen, K. M. and Kosiara-Pedersen, K. (2017). How campaigns polarize the electorate: Political polarization as an effect of the minimal effect theory within a multi-party system. *Party Politics, 23*(3), 181-192. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815593453

Hawdon, J., Ranganathan, S., Leman, S., Bookhultz, S. and Mitra, T. (2020). Social Media Use, Political Polarization, and Social Capital: Is Social Media Tearing the U.S. Apart? In G. Meiselwitz (Ed.), *Social Computing and Social Media. Design, Ethics, User Behavior, and Social Network Analysis.* Springer.

Hernández, E., Anduiza, E. and Rico, G. (2021). Affective polarization and the salience of elections. *Electoral Studies, 69*, 102203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102203

Horwitz, R. B. (2007). On media concentration and the diversity question. In P. M. Napoli (Ed.), *Media diversity and localism* (pp. 9-56). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49570-1_17

Iyengar, S. and Hahn, K. S. (2009). Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, *59*, 19-39. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x

Iyengar, S., Sood, G. and Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology: A social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 76*, 405-421. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038

Jones, D. (2001). Party polarization and legislative gridlock. *Political Research Quarterly, 54*(1), 125-141. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290105400107

Layman, G. C., Carsey, T. M. and Horowitz, J. M. (2006). Party polarization in American politics. Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *9*(1), 83-110. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.070204.105138

Lee, S. (2017). Implications of counter-attitudinal information exposure in further information-seeking and attitude change. *Information Research*, 22(3), 1-14.

Levendusky, M. (2013). *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226069159.001.0001

Lipset, S. and Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In S. Lipset y S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives.* New York: Free Press.

Lobato, R. M., Moyano, M., Bélanger, J. J. and Trujillo, H. M. (2020). The role of vulnerable environments in support for homegrown terrorism: Fieldwork using the 3N model. *Aggressive Behavior, 47*(1), 50-57.

LOREG. Ley Orgánica 5/1985, de 19 de junio, del Régimen Electoral General. *Boletín Oficial del Estado, 147*, de 20 de junio de 1985. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1985/06/19/5/con

Luengo, Ó. (2011). Debates electorales en televisión. Una aproximación preliminar a sus efectos inmediatos. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 25, 81-96.

Luengo, Ó., García-Marín, J. and de-Blasio, E. (2021). COVID-19 en Youtube: Debates y polarización en la esfera digital. *Comunicar, 29*(69), 9-19. https://doi.org/10.3916/C69-2021-01

Maier, J. and Nai, A. (2020). Roaring Candidates in the Spotlight: Campaign Negativity, Emotions, and Media Coverage in 107 National Elections. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 25*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612209190

McChesney, R. W. (1999). *Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times.* New York: The New Press.

Manin, B. (1998). *Los principios del gobierno representativo*. Madrid: Alianza.

Masip, P., Suau, J. and Ruiz-Caballero, C. (2020). Percepciones sobre medios de comunicación y desinformación: ideología y polarización en el sistema mediático español. *Profesional de la información*, 29(5). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.sep.27

Melero, I., Quiles, M. and López, M. (2023). Consumo de medios, exposición selectiva y polarización afectiva. In *III Encuesta Nacional de Polarización Política*. CEMOP. Grupo de Investigación de la Universidad de Murcia.

Miller, L. (2021). La polarización política en España: entre ideologías y sentimientos. *PAPELES de relaciones ecosociales y cambio global, 13*(152), 13-22.

Moreno-Mercado, J. M., García-Marín, J. and Luengo, Ó. (2022). Conflictos armados y la construcción de narrativas a través de Twitter. El caso de la guerra entre Armenia y Azerbaiyán. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política, 59*, 89-114. https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.59.04

Mudde, C. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2018). Studying populism in comparative perspective: reflections on the contemporary and future research agenda. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51 (13), 1667-1693. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018789490

Mutz, D. C. (2006). *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (1ª ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511617201

Napoli, P. M. (2001). Consumer Use of Medical Information from Electronic and Paper Media: A Literature Review. In R. Rice y J. Katz (Eds.), *The Internet and Health Communication: Experiences and Expectations* (pp. 79-98). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233277.n3

Orriols, L. (2021). La polarización afectiva en España: bloques ideológicos enfrentados. *EsadeEcPol Insight, 28* (marzo). https://dobetter.esade.edu/es/polarizacion-afectiva

Pariser, E. (2012). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you.* Penguin Books.

Peck, R. (2019). *Fox populism: Branding conservatism as working class.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pew Research Center (2018). *News Media and Political Attitudes in Spain.* https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-media-and-political-attitudes-in-spain/

Phillips, J. (2022). Affective polarization: Over time, through the generations, and during the lifespan. *Political Behavior, 44*(3), 1483-1508. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09784-4

Pop, A.-I., Marín Pérez, B. and Pérez-Sánchez, J. (2023). Liderazgo y personalización de la política. Sánchez y Casado en las elecciones generales de 2019: el papel constructor de las televisiones generalistas al bipartidismo. *Revista de Ciencias de la Comunicación e Información, 28*, 56-76. https://doi.org/10.35742/rcci.2023.28.e282

Prior, M. (2013). Media and Political Polarization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *16*(1), 101-127. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-100711-135242

Ramírez-Dueñas, J. M. and Humanes, M. L. (2023). Exposición selectiva y polarización de audiencias. Un análisis a través del consumo acumulado de información política en España. *Cuadernos.info*, (56), 1-21 https://dx.doi.org/10.7764/cdi.55.59797

Reinemann, C. and Wilke, J. (2007). It's the debates, stupid! How the introduction of televised debates changed the portrayal of chancellor candidates in the German press, *1949-2005. Press/Politics, 12*, 92-111.

Rinker, T. (2022). *Package 'sentimentr': Calculate Text Polarity Sentiment* (Version 2.9.0). https://github.com/trinker/sentimentr

Rivera, J. M., Jaráiz, E. and López, P. C. (2021). Emociones y política. In P. Escandón y S. Levoyer (Eds.), *Comunicación pública, pandemia y elecciones*. Quito: Corporación Editora Nacional.

Rodríguez, R. and Castromil, A. R. (2010). La circulación social de los encuadres periodísticos en tiempo de campaña electoral: Transmisión, influencia y atribución de responsabilidad. *ZER, 15*(23).

Röllicke, L. (2023). Polarisation, identity and affect-conceptualising affective polarisation in multi-party systems. *Electoral Studies, 85*, 102655. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2023.102655

Romero-Martín, G., Caraballo-Pou, M. Á. and Merchán-Hernández, C. (2024). Individual and institutional dimensions of affective polarisation: A proposal for an analytical framework. *Revista Española de Sociología-RES, 33*(1), a206-a206. https://doi.org/10.22325/fes/res.2024.206

Ruiz, L. and Danet, A. (2022). De lo ideológico a lo afectivo. Lecturas actuales sobre la participación y la polarización juvenil en Andalucía ante el auge de la derecha radical. *Revista Internacional de Pensamiento Político, 17*, 177-200. https://www.upo.es/revistas/index.php/ripp/article/view/7493/6593

Sartori, G. (1999). *Partidos y sistemas de partidos.* Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Serrano-Contreras, I.-J., García-Marín, J. y Luengo, Ó. (2020). Measuring online political dialogue: does polarization trigger more deliberation? *Media and Communication, 8*(4), 63-72. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i4.3149

Serrano-Contreras, I. J., García-Marín, J. and Luengo, Ó. (2021). Coberturas mediáticas, polarización y reformas educativas en España. *Revista de Ciencia Política, 41*(3), 497-514. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-090X2021005000109

Sunstein, C. (2009). *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Szabó, G., Norocel, O. C. and Bene, M. (2019). Media Visibility and Inclusion of Radical Right Populism in Hungary and Romania: A Discursive Opportunity Approach. *Problems of post-communism, 66*(1), 33-46.

Taboada Villamarín, A. (2024). Big data en ciencias sociales. Una introducción a la automatización de análisis de datos de texto mediante procesamiento de lenguaje natural y aprendizaje automático. *Revista CENTRA de Ciencias Sociales, 3*(1), 51-75. https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.51

Torcal, M. (2020). ¡Enfrentados y enfadados! Una realidad preocupante. *Agenda Pública.* https://agendapublica.es/enfrentados-y-enfadados-unarealidad-preocupante

Torcal, M. and Comelles, J. (2020). Affective Polarization in Southern Europe and Spain in Comparative Perspective [Manuscrito no publicado]. In Miller, L. (2021), La polarización política en España: entre ideologías y sentimientos. *PAPELES de relaciones ecosociales y cambio global, 13*(152), 15.

Wagner, M. (2021). Affective polarization in multiparty systems. *Electoral Studies, 69*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102199

Waisbord, S. (2020). ¿Es válido atribuir la polarización política a la comunicación digital? Sobre burbujas, plataformas y polarización afectiva. *Revista de la Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Político-SAAP, 14*(2), 248-279. http://dx.doi.org/10.46468/rsaap.14.2.a1

Notes

1   The emergence (and subsequent consolidation) of radical right parties within the European parliamentary context not only represents a counterweight to progressive social advances, but also forces the ideological repositioning of traditional political parties (Ruiz and Danet, 2022) and deepens a polarised vision of society as a whole, normalising the discursive structures of "us" and "them" that in certain cases legitimise aggression and violence towards the opposing group (Lobato *et al.*, 2020).

2   This blatant bias is not only questionable in democratic terms, but looking at its formal dimension, it contravenes legislative mandates, as stated in Article 66.1 of the Spanish Law on General Elections (LOREG): "Respect for political and social pluralism, as well as equality, proportionality and information neutrality in the programming of publicly owned media outlets during the electoral period will be guaranteed by the organisation of said media outlets and their supervision provided for under Law […]." In turn, the following paragraph (Art. 66.2) reads: "During the electoral period, privately owned broadcasters must respect the principles of pluralism and equality."

3   For a detailed explanation of the usefulness of natural language processing techniques in social research, see Taboada (2024).

Annexes

Annex 1. Polarisation and sentiment by channel

Table 1

Descriptives of the measure of polarisation of news stories mentioning any of the four main national parties, by channel

	Polarisation								
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	10th per-centile	25th per-centile	Median	75th per-centile	90th per-centile
Total	35.54	37.25	0.00	200.00	3.28	10.06	22.26	47.05	86.05
Antena 3	34.13	32.92	0.44	187.76	4.87	12.63	22.54	44.79	79.06
Canal Sur	47.97	48.07	0.14	177.53	4.88	12.86	30.76	66.35	116.59
La Sexta	34.94	36.73	0.00	200.00	2.27	9.52	22.97	45.43	78.08
TVE	32.15	31.15	0.14	179.31	3.42	9.66	23.10	44.42	71.21
Telecinco	35.54	43.21	0.14	170.71	2.59	7.31	16.35	44.38	97.57

Source: own research.

Table 2

Descriptives of the sentiment measure of news stories mentioning any of the four main national parties, by channel

	Polarisation								
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	10th per-centile	25th per-centile	Median	75th per-centile	90th per-centile
Total	-0.080	0.280	-1.000	1.000	-0.380	-0.220	-0.080	0.010	0.240
Antena 3	-0.080	0.260	-0.870	0.930	-0.360	-0.220	-0.080	0.010	0.240
Canal Sur	0.040	0.350	-0.820	0.880	-0.330	-0.190	-0.040	0.220	0.460
La Sexta	-0.080	0.270	-0.900	1.000	-0.380	-0.230	-0.070	0.030	0.230
TVE	-0.100	0.240	-0.710	0.890	-0.390	-0.240	-0.090	0.010	0.160
Telecinco	-0.150	0.290	-1.000	0.750	-0.590	-0.270	-0.090	-0.030	0.070

Source: own research.

Annex 2. Polarisation and party sentiment

Table 1

Descriptives of the measure of polarisation of news stories mentioning any of the four main national parties, by channel

	Polarisation								
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	10th per-centile	25th per-centile	Median	75th per-centile	90th per-centile
Total	35.54	37.25	0	200	3.28	10.06	22.26	47.05	86.05
PSOE	34.47	36.67	0	200	3.01	10.86	22.26	44.38	77.06
PP	30.5	33.08	0.14	177.53	2.59	8.58	17.4	41.9	71.21
Vox	40.28	39.24	0.14	177.53	3.42	12.36	29.66	52.96	94.54
Sumar	45.27	44.6	0.98	187.76	5.46	10.74	29.6	65.52	115.33

Source: own research.

Table 2

Descriptives of the sentiment measure of news stories mentioning any of the four main national parties, by channel

	Polarisation								
	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	10th per-centile	25th per-centile	Median	75th per-centile	90th per-centile
Total	-0.080	0.280	-1.000	1.000	-0.380	-0.220	-0.080	0.010	0.240
PSOE	-0.050	0.270	-0.900	1.000	-0.310	-0.220	-0.070	0.030	0.280
PP	-0.050	0.240	-1.000	0.880	-0.310	-0.170	-0.060	0.030	0.200
Vox	-0.150	0.290	-1.000	0.880	-0.500	-0.290	-0.150	-0.020	0.190
Sumar	-0.110	0.340	-0.870	0.930	-0.500	-0.290	-0.140	-0.020	0.320

Source: own research.

Annex 3. Two-way ANOVA

Table 1

Two-way ANOVA polarisation by party and channel

Channel	Party (I)	Party (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	95% CI for difference	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
Antena 3	PP	PSOE	-3.461	6.300	0.583	-15.832	8.911
		Sumar	-22.810	9.462	0.016	-41.390	-4.231
		Vox	-12.465	7.344	0.090	-26.885	1.956
	PSOE	PP	3.461	6.300	0.583	-8.911	15.832
		Sumar	-19.350	9.278	0.037	-37.567	-1.132
		Vox	-9.004	7.105	0.206	-22.955	4.947
	Sumar	PP	22.810	9.462	0.016	4.231	41.39
		PSOE	19.350	9.278	0.037	1.132	37.567
		Vox	10.346	10.016	0.302	-9.321	30.013
	Vox	PP	12.465	7.344	0.090	-1.956	26.885
		PSOE	9.004	7.105	0.206	-4.947	22.955
		Sumar	-10.346	10.016	0.302	-30.013	9.321
Canal Sur	PP	PSOE	13.585	10.588	0.200	-7.206	34.377
		Sumar	-17.369	18.265	0.342	-53.234	18.495
		Vox	1.205	12.604	0.924	-23.544	25.954
	PSOE	PP	-13.585	10.588	0.200	-34.377	7.206
		Sumar	-30.954	17.949	0.085	-66.199	4.29
		Vox	-12.380	12.142	0.308	-36.221	11.461
	Sumar	PP	17.369	18.265	0.342	-18.495	53.234
		PSOE	30.954	17.949	0.085	-4.290	66.199
		Vox	18.574	19.207	0.334	-19.140	56.289
	Vox	PP	-1.205	12.604	0.924	-25.954	23.544
		PSOE	12.380	12.142	0.308	-11.461	36.221
		Sumar	-18.574	19.207	0.334	-56.289	19.14
La Sexta	PP	PSOE	-7.773	7.578	0.305	-22.652	7.107
		Sumar	-4.404	9.433	0.641	-22.927	14.12
		Vox	-17.354	8.434	0.040	-33.915	-0.792
	PSOE	PP	7.773	7.578	0.305	-7.107	22.652
		Sumar	3.369	9.893	0.734	-16.057	22.795
		Vox	-9.581	8.945	0.285	-27.146	7.984
	Sumar	PP	4.404	9.433	0.641	-14.120	22.927
		PSOE	-3.369	9.893	0.734	-22.795	16.057
		Vox	-12.950	10.563	0.221	-33.692	7.792
	Vox	PP	17.354	8.434	0.040	0.792	33.915
		PSOE	9.581	8.945	0.285	-7.984	27.146
		Sumar	12.950	10.563	0.221	-7.792	33.692

Pairwise comparisons

Dependent variable: polarisation

			Pairwise comparisons				
Dependent variable: polarisation							
Channel	Party (I)	Party (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	95% CI for difference	
						Lower limit	Upper limit
TVE	PP	PSOE	-8.711	7.616	0.253	-23.665	6.244
		Sumar	-8.218	11.078	0.458	-29.971	13.535
		Vox	-2.382	8.253	0.773	-18.588	13.824
	PSOE	PP	8.711	7.616	0.253	-6.244	23.665
		Sumar	0.492	11.377	0.965	-21.848	22.833
		Vox	6.328	8.651	0.465	-10.658	23.315
	Sumar	PP	8.218	11.078	0.458	-13.535	29.971
		PSOE	-0.492	11.377	0.965	-22.833	21.848
		Vox	5.836	11.813	0.621	-17.361	29.032
	Vox	PP	2.382	8.253	0.773	-13.824	18.588
		PSOE	-6.328	8.651	0.465	-23.315	10.658
		Sumar	-5.836	11.813	0.621	-29.032	17.361
Telecinco	PP	PSOE	-3.907	8.813	0.658	-21.211	13.398
		Sumar	-28.433	11.701	0.015	-51.409	-5.457
		Vox	-11.618	8.651	0.180	-28.605	5.368
	PSOE	PP	3.907	8.813	0.658	-13.398	21.211
		Sumar	-24.526	12.241	0.046	-48.563	-0.489
		Vox	-7.712	9.369	0.411	-26.108	10.685
	Sumar	PP	28.433	11.701	0.015	5.457	51.409
		PSOE	24.526	12.241	0.046	0.489	48.563
		Vox	16.815	12.125	0.166	-6.994	40.624
	Vox	PP	11.618	8.651	0.180	-5.368	28.605
		PSOE	7.712	9.369	0.411	-10.685	26.108
		Sumar	-16.815	12.125	0.166	-40.624	6.994

Based on estimated marginal means.

Note *: the difference in means is significant at the 0.05 level.

Note b: adjustment for various comparisons: least significant difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

Source: own research.

Annex 4. Polarisation and sentiment by channel and party

Table 1

Descriptives of the polarisation measure by channel and party

		Polarisation								
		Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Ptil. 10	Ptil. 25	Median	Ptil. 75	Ptil. 90
Antena 3	PSOE	31.40	30.46	0.44	169.81	4.88	11.44	21.12	41.22	71.21
	PP	27.94	26.05	0.67	133.58	4.06	12.55	20.70	37.75	62.22
	Vox	40.40	30.64	0.69	110.49	8.17	17.23	33.89	52.96	88.79
	Sumar	50.75	54.46	0.98	187.76	6.36	10.40	26.48	74.65	145.76
Canal Sur	PSOE	38.75	38.25	4.88	177.53	8.77	13.39	26.21	58.92	88.45
	PP	52.34	54.72	0.14	177.53	2.42	6.57	45.09	92.02	137.29
	Vox	51.13	49.16	0.69	177.53	7.82	16.91	37.39	56.57	116.59
	Sumar	69.71	65.66	3.18	177.53	3.18	44.62	46.93	76.28	177.53
La Sexta	PSOE	36.49	44.25	0.00	200.00	2.44	7.97	19.72	44.53	93.58
	PP	28.71	28.69	0.61	158.27	1.20	10.38	18.40	38.31	66.85
	Vox	46.07	42.91	1.20	158.27	5.91	12.83	31.96	61.45	134.20
	Sumar	33.12	28.18	3.21	113.14	4.06	12.34	25.70	44.45	65.52
TVE	PSOE	36.91	39.08	1.20	179.31	3.21	12.56	27.18	41.20	78.08
	PP	28.20	26.80	0.85	118.45	5.84	9.48	16.91	40.57	65.41
	Vox	30.58	23.79	0.14	86.61	2.11	9.02	30.69	48.69	60.78
	Sumar	36.41	35.29	5.46	116.51	5.84	7.31	24.49	60.71	86.61
Telecinco	PSOE	32.11	36.38	1.38	145.30	2.14	3.41	22.04	44.36	85.91
	PP	28.20	37.59	0.14	170.71	2.59	7.31	14.26	35.27	69.24
	Vox	39.82	51.80	0.14	170.71	3.41	6.25	16.52	44.38	144.05
	Sumar	56.64	48.40	3.21	131.27	7.76	13.26	42.11	94.54	125.86

Source: own research.

Table 2

Descriptives of the sentiment measure by channel and party

		Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Polarisation Ptil. 10	Ptil. 25	Median	Ptil. 75	Ptil. 90
Antena 3	PSOE	-0.070	0.240	-0.730	0.840	-0.370	-0.220	-0.070	0.020	0.220
	PP	-0.040	0.200	-0.550	0.640	-0.250	-0.190	-0.050	0.040	0.200
	Vox	-0.160	0.260	-0.610	0.520	-0.500	-0.310	-0.210	-0.060	0.190
	Sumar	-0.050	0.410	-0.870	0.930	-0.480	-0.220	-0.090	0.060	0.580
Canal Sur	PSOE	0.050	0.270	-0.250	0.880	-0.220	-0.160	-0.010	0.240	0.400
	PP	0.030	0.400	-0.820	0.880	-0.380	-0.110	-0.040	0.190	0.420
	Vox	0.010	0.380	-0.380	0.880	-0.360	-0.240	-0.100	0.190	0.550
	Sumar	0.090	0.520	-0.330	0.880	-0.330	-0.320	-0.100	0.330	0.880
La Sexta	PSOE	-0.030	0.310	-0.900	1.000	-0.280	-0.120	-0.040	0.030	0.270
	PP	-0.070	0.220	-0.590	0.770	-0.310	-0.180	-0.080	0.020	0.150
	Vox	-0.160	0.330	-0.890	0.770	-0.570	-0.330	-0.150	-0.010	0.250
	Sumar	-0.050	0.240	-0.430	0.530	-0.290	-0.190	-0.060	0.060	0.260
TVE	PSOE	-0.060	0.290	-0.620	0.890	-0.290	-0.240	-0.090	0.030	0.200
	PP	-0.070	0.210	-0.600	0.560	-0.360	-0.170	-0.050	0.010	0.160
	Vox	-0.120	0.210	-0.550	0.280	-0.390	-0.270	-0.090	0.010	0.160
	Sumar	-0.260	0.210	-0.710	-0.040	-0.550	-0.410	-0.210	-0.110	-0.040
Telecinco	PSOE	-0.120	0.260	-0.740	0.700	-0.360	-0.270	-0.080	-0.020	0.100
	PP	-0.070	0.250	-1.000	0.750	-0.290	-0.150	-0.060	0.000	0.180
	Vox	-0.240	0.310	-1.000	0.300	-0.860	-0.310	-0.140	-0.060	0.010
	Sumar	-0.250	0.370	-0.790	0.420	-0.760	-0.590	-0.170	-0.040	0.190

Source: own research.

Paloma Egea-Cariñanos

She completed the professor training course in the Department of Political Science at the University of Granada (UGR). Her line of research focuses on the rural world and the different ways it is handled by political parties, the media outlets and the urban environment. Through rural political science, she has experience working with ideology, political and electoral behaviour, and polarisation. She holds a double degree in law and political science (UGR), a master's degree in constitutional law (UIMP-CEPC) and a postgraduate certificate in applied social research (CIS).

Daniel Bianchi

He completed his professor training in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of La Laguna (ULL). He is a member of the Centre for Social Inequality and Governance Studies (CEDESOG) at ULL. His line of research covers the study of social inequality, paying particular attention to the intergenerational transmission of inequality through the educational system. He has experience in the use of quantitative social research techniques in the field of sociology of education, sociology of health and political sociology. He holds a bachelor's degree in sociology (ULL) and a master's degree in social problems (UNED).

Mario Delgado-Lillo

He is a double graduate in law and political science and administration and has been a collaborating student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Granada. He is beginning his research in political communication, focusing on the content analysis of traditional media outlets.

DEBATE/
DEBATE

Editorial: Political Polarisation: Definition, Dimensions, Measuring, Results and Effects

Editorial: La polarización política: definición, dimensiones, medición, resultados y efectos

Francisco José Llera Ramo
University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain
francisco.llera@ehu.es

ABSTRACT

This article provides an introduction to the current state of research on political polarisation. It is part of the Debate section of the *CENTRA Journal of Social Sciences*, which contrasts different approaches concerning its definition, dimensions, measurement and the empirical evidence regarding its impact and evolution in Spain from a comparative perspective. Political polarisation—regardless of its variant (ideological, affective, everyday, etc.), its origins or its discursive battleground (ideological, identity-based, value-driven, etc.)—is characterised by confrontation between elites and/or citizens aligned into irreconcilable block. The article begins by establishing a conceptual framework and highlighting its socio-political significance, distinguishing its presence among elites and the general public to emphasise its emotional component, as well as its possible causes and effects. Its multidimensional nature and measurement serve as a prelude to the three articles included in this section, which focus, respectively, on the measurement and assessment of ideological polarisation, identity-based polarisation and the so-called GAL/TAN dimension.

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.109

RESUMEN

Este artículo realiza una introducción al estado de la cuestión de la polarización política. Se enmarca en la sección Debate de la *Revista CENTRA de Ciencias Sociales*, dedicada a contrastar los distintos enfoques sobre su definición, sus dimensiones, su medición y las evidencias empíricas sobre su impacto y evolución en España, en una perspectiva comparada. La polarización política, sea cual sea su variante (ideológica, afectiva, cotidiana, etc.) o inspiración y campo de batalla dialéctico (ideológico, identitario, valorativo...), es la confrontación entre élites y/o ciudadanos alineados en bloques irreconciliables. Se comienza con una delimitación conceptual y las evidencias de su relevancia sociopolítica, distinguiendo su presencia entre las élites y la ciudadanía para resaltar su componente emocional, así como sus posibles causas y efectos. Su carácter multidimensional y la medición dan paso, precisamente, a los tres artículos referidos, respectivamente, a la medición y evaluación de la polarización ideológica, la identitaria y la llamada GAL/TAN.

PALABRAS CLAVE: polarizacion; ideología; políticas públicas; identidad nacional; postmaterialismo; GAL/TAN.

1. Introduction

Liberal democracy is characterised by competition among party elites over the politicisation of interests, social conflicts and preferences of all kinds, aiming to align citizens around programmatic alternatives to power, which can be achieved through the maximisation of support and electoral aggregation. This dynamic, inherent to pluralist societies and systems, fosters fragmentation among competitors and, above all, competitive polarisation within an unstable equilibrium based on alternation and negotiation, which may be more or less inclusive.

The degree of fragmentation (ranging from bipartisanship to more or less extreme multi-party systems) and the intensity of polarisation (between centripetal competition and centrifugal, anti-system segmentation), along with their characteristics and reciprocal dynamics, have long posed challenges to the governability, stability and performance of our democracies (Sani and Sartori, 1983). These issues have become a major academic concern and a central subject of study within the field of Western political science. We are witnessing the resurgence of old political spectres of an ethnocentric and authoritarian nature, infused with xenophobia and populism. These forces give rise to aggressively introverted movements, characterised by the search for a scapegoat and the predominance of emotion over reason (Arias, 2016).

Undoubtedly, the most extreme manifestation of this polarising dynamic occurs when attitudes and discourses of allegiance versus hatred escalate into violent behaviour, leading to confrontations between opposing factions or even the eradication of adversaries. The consequences of such developments can be difficult to predict and, more importantly, to contain. The past decade has been marked by violent incidents rooted in political polarisation, of which we will highlight only a few cases that have occurred in consolidated democracies and during key moments of electoral

decision-making: 1) the assault on M. Rajoy during a campaign event in Pontevedra on 16 December 2015; 2) the insurrectional acts surrounding the illegal referendum on Catalan independence on 1 October 2017 (with a 43% turnout of the Catalan electorate) and, in particular, the violent demonstrations by the CDR and the so-called Democratic Tsunami strategy in response to the *procès* trial verdict issued by the Supreme Court on 14 October 2019; 3) the attempted assassination of Jair Bolsonaro during a campaign event in Brazil on 6 September 2018; 4) the violent assault on the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021, opposing the proclamation of Joe Biden as President of the United States; 5) the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during a campaign event on 8 July 2022; 6) the attempted assassination of Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico on 15 May 2024; 7) a series of assassinations of political leaders during electoral processes in India; 8) violent clashes in France surrounding the 2024 European and legislative elections; and finally, 9) the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump during a campaign event on 14 July 2024 in Butler, Pennsylvania. It is evident that this issue holds undeniable relevance from any perspective, particularly as it strikes at the very heart of our advanced democracies.

2. Elites and citizens

The first distinction to address is the differentiation between the polarisation of the elites (primarily partisan), the polarisation of the citizenry (or electorate) and, increasingly, that of opinion and/or emotion shapers, such as the *mass media* and *social media*. Evidently, the key issue lies in whether the competitive strategies of the elites and the media permeate the electorate or broader citizenry beyond mere alignments or the formation of preferences, fostering attitudes that are, to varying degrees, "tribal" (Clark *et al.*, 2019), structured around an *us-versus-them* or *friend-versus-enemy* confrontation.

This phenomenon is, therefore, deliberately cultivated by the elites (and their *communication strategists*) and reinforced by the media and social media to segment the citizenry into groups defined by adherence or rejection, based on an imaginary yet functionally effective boundary (Miller, 2023, p. 41) from the standpoint of political competition. The challenge arises when this dynamic escalates into radicalisation, intolerance and mutual rejection among these segments, ultimately hindering deliberation and restricting pluralism.

3. From the programmatic to the emotional

It is one thing for political competitors to offer distinct programmes and policy proposals aligned with their ideological framework of beliefs and values, aimed at addressing the interests of a defined "social base" and thereby fostering party identification (*policy preferences*). It is quite another when polarisation is driven by positions taken either positively (in favour of *one's own side*) or negatively (against the *others*).

This type of polarisation takes on an attitudinal, social and emotional dimension, leading to unconditional loyalties and/or extreme delegitimisation of the opposition, resulting in a deeply personal form of Manichaean division (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes, 2012, pp. 405 ff.). In this sense, it resembles the behaviour of *hooligans* on both sides of sporting events, whom we are forced to endure, powerless, all too often.

Thus, while partisan elites—depending on the context—are ultimately compelled to negotiate and find common ground on matters of the *political agenda*, no matter how far apart they may be (political or programmatic polarisation), this dynamic becomes significantly more challenging, if not impossible, when emotional vetoes rooted in incompatibility, delegitimisation or even the hatred of personal radicalisation come into play (affective polarisation). In this way, political polarisation seeps into social relations like a self-destructive poison and, as such, becomes inherently *anti-systemic* (Rojo and Crespo, 2023).

The steady rise of support for anti-system parties and attitudes in recent decades across our liberal democracies is an undeniable and ever-present reality (Hernández and Kriesi, 2016; Wolinetz and Zaslove, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019), leading to a corresponding intensification and expansion of both political and affective polarisation. The centripetal, moderating and inclusive dynamics of previous decades—characterised by high levels of electoral mobilisation, party loyalty, institutional trust and intersubjective confidence—have been replaced, more or less abruptly, by centrifugal, radical or even extremist attitudes, electoral demobilisation, increasing dissatisfaction with institutional functioning, the crisis of traditional parties and intersubjective distrust, all of which are key drivers of affective polarisation (Westwood *et al.*, 2018).

4. Possible causes

Social scientists have sought to diagnose the causes of this phenomenon by distinguishing between several analytical levels: partisan or social movement elites, the citizenry or general public, and opinion shapers (traditional and social media). At the same time, three types of explanations have been proposed: economic, institutional and cultural. First, it is not unreasonable to link the emergence or, in some cases, the strengthening of extremist *anti-establishment* movements and parties—and the corresponding rise in popular support—to periods of economic downturn, increasing inequality, the deterioration of social protection and major public services and heightened social exclusion and vulnerability. Similar patterns were observed during the Great Depression of the 1930s and, more recently, following the Great Recession triggered by the 2008 global financial crisis (Funke, Schularick and Trebesch, 2016). These adverse social and economic conditions create fertile ground for populist and delegitimising narratives of traditional parties ("austericide") to take root among discontented sectors of the citizenry, fuelling radical attitudes of rejection.

Second, the identity and programmatic crisis of traditional parties—driven by the phenomenon of so-called "political cartelisation" (Katz and Mair, 2018) and their

colonisation of state institutions as instruments of power—along with irregular financing, political corruption and leadership crises, has rendered them giants with feet of clay. Fixated on a centripetal competitive dynamic that left them without alternative agendas, merely alternating and sharing institutional power, these parties have fostered a sense of political "orphanhood" across the competitive spectrum. As a result, growing segments of the electorate have felt unrepresented and devoid of political prospects. Once again, conditions were ripe for the emergence of extremist movements and populist, staunchly *anti-establishment* (or *anti-elite*) leaders.

The third explanatory approach concerns the transformations within our societies resulting from the effects of globalisation in general and regional integration processes in particular. This is especially evident in the EU, where there has been a clear loss of sovereignty for nation-states in crucial economic matters such as investment, the financial system, public debt, taxation, energy and technological autonomy and the sustainability of traditional productive sectors, among others. As a result, the political agenda of the elites has increasingly shifted towards cultural issues related to beliefs, values and social practices (gender identities, the climate crisis, abortion, euthanasia, secularism, immigration, multiculturalism, drug consumption, disinformation, privacy, solidarities, pacifism and more). Many of these have escalated into full-scale battlegrounds (*culture wars*), marked by extreme positions held by movements and parties (Hunter, 1991). This form of emotional polarisation, centred on values and identities, is actively pursued by the elites and their media affiliates to secure their hegemony (Gramsci, 1924; and the neoconservative reinterpretation by De Benoist, 1977) in both social and political spheres through the imposition of their ideological world view via mechanisms such as disinformation, denialism, historical revisionism and various forms of cancellation. All of this gives rise to a new *cleavage* or axis of confrontation (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

Beyond the combined impact of these three causal factors on each particular case, additional contextual elements must also be considered. These include the structure and dynamics of party competition, the persistence of unresolved historical *cleavages*, electoral regulations, elite selection processes, *accountability* mechanisms and, above all, the increasing personalisation of politics and electoral campaigns (particularly through negative advertising). In this context, communication and image "strategists" play an increasingly significant—yet insufficiently examined—role in exacerbating emotional polarisation, particularly with the rise of social and digital media (Crespo, Melero, Mora and Rojo, 2024).

In social and political environments where such dynamics operate, whether temporarily or over the long term, the emergence of extremist *anti-establishment* parties and/or movements—driven by populist discourse (Mudde and Rovira, 2018) and intent on destabilising the prevailing partitocratic balance—fosters affective polarisation when they succeed in becoming reference points for group structuring and position-taking within competing ideological blocs. This is particularly true when partisan elites are more inclined towards conflict than cooperation. One might assume that the climate of affective polarisation is activated and intensified only dur-

ing electoral cycles, following the rhythm of campaigns in which group identities and partisan allegiances are emotionally reinforced through mutual distancing and rejection between competitors (*us* vs *them, friends* vs *enemies, good* vs *evil*). However, this climate has ceased to be cyclical or temporary, instead evolving into a state of permanent negative campaigning, controlled by weakened party organisations dominated by populist leadership (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes, 2012).

While this is the reality at the elite level, affective polarisation among the electorate is more likely in contexts of social *segmentation* (Sartori, 1980, pp. 224 ff.), where ideological and partisan divisions take root in homogeneous socio-demographic profiles with mutually negative perceptions. Beyond hindering cooperative interactions, these divisions derive their primary incentive for reinforcement from rejection and confrontation. Thus, ideological, programmatic or partisan divisions become further exacerbated when they are *tribalised*, taking root in social environments marked by strong group identification and fostering attitudes and behaviours of prejudice and intergroup rejection, leaving little room for connection.

This picture is further reinforced at the level of traditional media and social media, beyond the influence of communication campaigns already mentioned. Exposure to and consumption of media with a clear political bias—particularly when presented in a radical manner—directly amplifies the emotional polarisation of audiences, deepening the "perceptual gap". "Spectacle politics" (infotainment, partisan talk shows, etc.) and disinformation are two inherently polarising mechanisms, often strategically programmed and scripted by audiovisual media. Added to this, in recent decades, is the growing prominence of the digital ecosystem, with its strong capacity for social penetration and segmentation, further intensifying mechanisms of disinformation, discursive simplification and negative radicalism (Yarchi, Baden and Kligler-Vilenchik, 2021, pp. 98 ff.; Kubin and von Sikorski, 2021, pp. 188 ff.).

5. Effects

As Sani and Sartori (1983) warned, polarisation becomes particularly dangerous for democracy when it distorts the competitive dynamic between political *adversaries* who seek to persuade in order to prevail, transforming it instead into a relentless battle between *enemies* to be eliminated. This fractures society into irreconcilable factions, obstructing any possibility of understanding or agreement between opposing blocs. In this way, the inherently *centripetal* nature of democratic competition and governance is supplanted by a *centrifugal* dynamic, shaped and dictated by the extreme poles of each political bloc. At the same time, centrist or moderate political attitudes and actors are increasingly marginalised—an ongoing trend observed in nearly all democracies today, with few exceptions. The *anti-system* movement finds space to take root and gains incentives for its consolidation precisely through institutional and non-institutional practices that strengthen its capacity to weaken or eliminate political adversaries, even at the expense of the separation of powers or the fundamental principles of the rule of law. This creates fertile ground for *politics of*

overpromise and for populist discourses and movements that are blatantly irresponsible and dismissive of the democratic demands of *accountability.*

The institutional consequences are evident in terms of partitocratic instability and volatility, systemic governance challenges and, ultimately, the risk of collapse (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Democratic quality inevitably deteriorates, as such institutional instability weakens institutional performance and fosters the rise of leaderships inclined towards personalist imposition. These leaders often pursue clientelist political agendas, implement reforms and institutional practices aimed at restricting freedoms and rights (such as freedom of information or judicial independence), curtail political competition (through electoral mechanisms and financing) and undermine the separation of powers—consistently favouring the executive over other branches of government (Llera, 2016b).

As previously mentioned, the problem worsens when the effects of polarisation permeate the social fabric and influence the citizenry, particularly through increasing negative attitudes towards politics, dissatisfaction with key political actors (anti-party sentiment), the widespread erosion of institutional trust, a crisis of representation, and growing scepticism about the functioning of democracy (Torcal and Montero, 2006). These dynamics ultimately lead to the erosion of democratic support and, consequently, its social legitimacy. The next stage occurs when political disaffection begins to erode social trust (Torcal and Martini, 2018) and interpersonal relationships, exacerbating intolerance, dismantling value systems and subordinating ethical principles to incompatible group loyalties.

Once a polarised mindset takes hold among voters—who perceive themselves as deeply divided along dual *cleavages* of group loyalty—emotions, fears and unconscious desires increasingly filter and distort the interpretation of information and political positions, both their own and those of others. Such a context is particularly conducive to polarising leaderships and their communication teams, who, by reinforcing these induced patterns of reasoning, pursue electoral success by exploiting the fears and anxieties of their supporters.

6. Measuring a multidimensional reality

Polarisation, therefore, can be studied and measured either as a state (the degree of opposition between opinions or perceptions relative to a theoretical maximum) or as a process or dynamic (the evolution of such opposition over time). The study of bipolar competition in liberal democracies is an integral aspect of political analysis, encompassing both political culture and, more specifically, electoral behaviour. The key lies in identifying and, where possible, measuring the substantive dimension that explains, on the one hand, the defining characteristics of partisan strategies and, on the other, the nature of political alignments within the electorate. Thus, different explanatory paradigms of bipolar competition emerged in each democracy, shaped by the specific historical developments that accompanied their formation and the

crystallisation of their political cultures.

The first major paradigm in American political science was that of "party identification" (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Stokes, Campbell and Miller, 1958; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960; Budge *et al.*, 1976), which corresponded to a stable model of bipartisan competition.

In Europe, however, due to the enduring influence of traditional society and the central role of revolutionary movements, the dynamics were different. Here, historical *cleavages* (such as rural vs urban, Church vs State, centre vs periphery or capital vs labour) were systematically theorised within the nation-building paradigm, primarily developed by Stein Rokkan (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan, 1970). This framework accounted for the greater degree of party pluralism in European political competition, which, despite its diversity, often coalesced into a bipolar—or at times even bipartisan—tension. Thus, ideological belief systems (Apter, 1963) soon found their explanatory framework in the spatial left-right model (Bartolini and Mair, 1960; Daalder and Mair, 1983; Enelow and Hinich, 1984 and 1990; Castles and Mair, 1984; Budge, Robertson and Hearl, 1987; Van Deth and Geurts, 1989; Enelow and Munger, 1992; Klingemann, 1995; Sanders, 1999; and Kroh, 2007), which remained dominant for a long time, particularly in Europe.

However, a new interpretative paradigm soon emerged in the United States, led by Inglehart (1977, 1990), presenting a less bipolar and more hierarchical or pyramidal view of value preferences, linked to a needs-based scale. This approach was rooted in the humanistic psychology of "need theory", developed by Abraham Maslow (1943) in the 1940s. Nevertheless, it ultimately also applied a dichotomous model, oscillating between "materialist" and "post-materialist" values, preferences and political cultures. More recently, expanding on the new dimensions identified by the post-materialist paradigm and in response to the social, cultural, partisan and behavioural transformations in advanced democracies, a new analytical model—GAL/TAN (Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist)—has been developed that aims to construct a bipolar scale parallel to the traditional left-right spectrum. This model prioritises the cultural dimensions of "new politics" (Hoodge, Marks and Wilson, 2002) over the economic primacy emphasised in the traditional model. However, it remains a contested framework due to concerns regarding the applicability and empirical validation of its corresponding scale (Moberg, 2014).

While the aforementioned dimensions of polarisation are the most prevalent and widely shared across different democratic cultures, it is also relevant to revisit the *cleavage* model of the *state-building* paradigm to examine specific cases where polarisation stems from other sources, such as religious, linguistic, ethnic or migratory tensions. In particular, the centre-periphery divide and the national/regional factor (Linz, 1985; Linz *et al.*, 1981) have constituted a fundamental *cleavage* in Spanish politics over the past two centuries (Linz, 1973, pp. 32 ff.; Pallarés, Montero and Llera, 1997). Thus, in the Catalan (Medina, 2018) and Basque (Linz *et al.*, 1986; Llera, 2013;

Leonisio, 2015; Llera, 2016a; Llera and Leonisio, 2017; Llera, Leonisio and Pérez, 2017; Llera, García and León-Ranero, 2022; Llera and León-Ranero, 2023) cases in particular, we can speak of "identity-based polarisation".

The articles in this Debate section bring together three significant contributions aimed at understanding the multidimensional nature of polarisation, its empirical study, its current state and evolution, and its application within our context.

7. Conclusions

Professor Miller's text provides an assessment of ideological and public policy polarisation in Spain, highlighting its continuous increase from a longitudinal perspective. However, it notes greater moderation in economic issues (taxation, redistribution, immigration management, etc.) compared to moral and ethical debates.

Professor León's contribution focuses on measuring identity-based polarisation in Spain, validating various indicators used in datasets from the CIS, CEO, ICPS and Euskobarómetro ("Basque barometer"). His analysis tracks its evolution across the three regions with significant nationalist presence, applying both the *pluralist* (or bipolar) and *peripheral* (or unipolar) approaches, ultimately favouring the former.

Finally, Professors Mora, Rojo and Soler analyse the GAL/TAN dimension (Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) and its implications for sociocultural polarisation and emerging political agendas. Thus, citizens' positions in survey studies on issues such as feminism, environmentalism, immigration and gender-based violence are examined quantitatively, with the aim of identifying the influencing variables and their impact on levels of affective polarisation. The findings highlight the role of these issues in exacerbating sociocultural divisions and intensifying interparty hostility, while also underscoring the growing significance of generational and gender-related factors, key empirical insights in the Spanish context.

8. Bibliography

Apter, D. (Ed.) (1963). *Ideologie and Discontent.* New York: Free Press.

Arias, M. (2016). *La democracia sentimental. Política y emociones en el s. XXI.* Barcelona: Página Indómita.

Bartolini, S. and Mair, P. (1960). *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Budge, I. *et al.* (Eds.) (1976). *Party Identification and Beyond.* London: Wiley.

Budge, I., Robertson, D. and Hearl, D. (Eds.) (1987). *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracie*s. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Campbell, A., Gurin, G. and Miller, W. E. (1954). *The voter Decides.* Evanston: Row, Peterson & Co.

Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E. and Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American Voter.* New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Castles, F. G. and Mair, P. (1984). Left-right political scales: some 'expert' judgements. *European Journal of Political Research*, 12, 73-88.

Clark, C. J., Liu, B. S., Winegard, B. M. and Ditto, P. H. (2019). Tribalism is Human Nature. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 28/6, 587-592.*

Crespo, I., Melero, I., Mora, A. and Rojo, J. M. (2024). Política, uso de medios y polarización afectiva en España. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 15/2, 1-18.

Daalder, H. and Mair, P. (Eds.) (1983). *Western European Party Systems: continuity and change.* Beverly Hills, London: Sage.

De Benoist, A. (1977). *Vu de droite. Anthologie crìtique des idées contemporaines.* Paris: Copernic.

Enelow, J. M. and Hinich, M. J. (1984). *The Spatial Theory of Voting.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Enelow, J. M. and Hinich, M. J. (1990). *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Elections.* New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Enelow, J. M. and Munger, M. C. (1992). The Spatial Theory of Ideology. *Journal of Theoretical Politics, 4*, 5-27.

Funke, M., Schularick, M. and Trebesch, C. (2016). Going to Extremes: Politics after Financial Crisis, 1870-2014. *European Economic Review,* 88, 227-260.

Gramsci, A. ([1924] 2018). *Los intelectuales y la formación de la cultura.* Buenos Aires: Marcial Pons.

Hernández, E. and Kriesi, H. (2016). The Electoral Consequences of the Financial and Economic Crisis in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research, 55/2, 203-224.*

Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Wilson, C. J. (2002). Does left/right structure party positions on European integration? *Comparative Political Studies, 35*/8, 965-989.

Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage Theory Meets Europe's Crisis: Lipset, Rokkan, and the Transnational Cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy, 25*/1, 109-135.

Hunter, J. D. (1991). *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America.* New York: Basic Books.

Inglehart, R. (1977). *The Silent Revolution.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society.* Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Iyengar, S., Sood, G. and Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affec, not ideology: a social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 76*/3, 405-431.

Katz, R. and Mair, P. (2018). *Democracy and the Cartelization of Political Parties.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Klingemann, H. D. (1995). Party Positions and Voter Orientations. In H. D. Kliengemann and D. Fuchs (Eds.), *Citizens and the State* (pp. 183-205). Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Kroh, Martin (2007). Measuring Left-right Political Orientation: The Choice of Response Format. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 71*/2, 204-220.

Kubin, E. and von Sikorski, C. (2021). The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 45*/3, 188-206.

Leonisio, R. (2015). Del triángulo al cuadrado. Aplicación de la teoría de los cleavages a la historia política vasca. *Historia Actual Online*, 36, 185-196.

Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018). *Cómo mueren las democracias.* Madrid: Ariel.

Linz, J. J. (1973). Early State-Building and Late Peripheral Nationalisms against the State. In S. N. Eisenstadt y S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Building States and Nations: Models, Analyses and Data across Three Worlds* (vol. 2, pp. 32-112). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Linz, J. J. (1985). From Primordialism to Nationalism. En E. A. Tiryakian y R. Rogowski (Eds.), *New Nationalism of the Developed West* (pp. 203-253). Boston: Allen & Unwin.

Linz, J. J. *et al.* (1981). *Informe sociológico sobre el cambio político en España.* Madrid: Euramérica.

Linz, J. J. *et al.* (1986). *Conflicto en Euskadi.* Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.

Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (Eds.) (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives.* New York: The Free Press.

Llera, F. J. (2013). ETA: medio siglo de terrorismo y limpieza étnica en Euskadi. *Sistema*, 231, 3-46.

Llera, F. J. (Ed.) (2016a). *Las elecciones autonómicas en el País Vasco, 1980-2012.* Madrid: CIS.

Llera, F. J. (Coord.) (2016b). *Desafección política y regeneración democrática en la España actual: diagnósticos y propuestas.* Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.

Llera, F. J. and Leonisio, R. (2017). La estrategia del miedo. ETA y la espiral del silencio en el País Vasco. *Informe del Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo*, 1.

Llera, F. J., García, J. and León-Ranero, J. M. (2022). Midiendo la espiral del silencio en contextos de violencia política: el caso vasco. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 58, 111-140.

Llera, F. J., Leonisio, Rafael and Pérez, S. (2017). The influence of the elites' discourse in political attitudes: evidence from the Basque Country. *National Identities*, *10*(4), 367-393.

Llera, F. J. and León-Ranero, J. M. (2023). Coalicionabilidad en un contexto de pluralismo polarizado: el caso vasco. In J. I. Estévez *et al.* (Eds.), *Gobernabilidad y Gobiernos de Coalición.* Buenos Aires: Cátedra Abierta Democracia y Parlamento Futuro.

Maslow, A. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review, 50/4*, 370-396.

Medina, L. (2018). Cataluña: ¿Una sociedad dividida por la mitad? El efecto del contexto entre los no nacionalistas. *Quaderns de l'ICPS*, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.

Miller, L. (2023). *Polarizados: La política que nos divide.* Barcelona: Deusto.

Moberg, E. (2014). *Towards a Science of States: their Evolution and Properties.* Lund Skäne: Mobergs Publ.

Mudde, C. and Rovira, C. (2018). Studying populism in comparative perspective: reflections on the contemporary and future research agenda. *Comparative Political Studies, 51/*13, 1667-1693.

Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Pallarés, F., Montero, J. R. and Llera, F. J. (1997). Non State-wide Parties in Spain: An Attitudinal Study of Nationalism and Regionalism. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 27, 4, 135-169.

Rojo, J. M. and Crespo-Martínez, I. (2023). Lo político como algo personal: una revisión teórica sobre la polarización afectiva. *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 43/1, 25-48.

Rokkan, S. (1970). *Citizens, elections, parties.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Sanders, D. (1999). The Impact of Left-rightIdeology. In G. Evans y P. Norris (Eds.), *Critical Elections. British Parties and Voters in Long-term Perspective* (pp. 182-206). London: Sage.

Sani, G. and Sartori, G. (1983). Polarization, Fragmentation and Competition in Western Democracies. In H. Daalder and P. Mair (Eds.), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change.* London: Sage.

Sartori, G. (1966). European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism. In J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner (Eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (pp. 137-176). Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Sartori, G. (1980). *Partidos y sistemas de partidos.* Madrid: Alianza.

Stokes, D. E., Campbell, A. and Miller, W. E. (1958). Components of electoral decision. *American Political Science Review*, 52, 367-387.

Torcal, M. and Martini, S. (2018). Los efectos negativos de la polarización política: confianza social, partidismo e identidades nacionales/territoriales en España. *Anuario de la facultad de Derecho de la Univ. Autónoma de Madrid*, 17, 333-354.

Torcal, M. and Montero, J. R. (Eds.) (2006). *Political disaffection in contemporary democracies.* London: Routledge.

Van Deth, J. W. and Geurts, P. (1989). Value orientation, left-right placement and voting. *European Journal of Political Research*, 17, 17-34.

Westwood, S. J., Iyengar, S., Walgrave, S., Leonisio, R., Miller, L. and Strijbis, O. (2018). The tie that divides: Cross-national evidence of the primacy of partyism. *European Journal of Political Research, 57/2*, 333-354.

Wolinetz, S. and Zaslove, A. (2018). *Absorbing the Blow Populist Parties and their Impact on Parties and Party Systems.* ECPR Press.

Yarchi, M., Baden, C. and Kligler-Vilenchnik, N. (2021). Political polarization on the digital sphere: A cross-platform, over-time analysis of international, positional, and affective polarization on social media. *Political Communication, 38/1-2*, 98-139.

Francisco José Llera Ramo

Francisco José Llera Ramo is an emeritus professor of political science at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and founder of the *Euskobarómetro*. He has also held the positions of visiting scholar at Yale University (1987) and Prince of Asturias Distinguished Visiting Professor at Georgetown University (2002). His publications include *La década del cambio en Andalucía* (2023), *Las elecciones autonómicas (2017–2019)* (2022), *Las elecciones generales de 2015 y 2016* (2018), *Desafección política y regeneración democrática en la España actual* (2016), *Las elecciones autonómicas en el País Vasco, 1980–2012* (2016), *Política comparada. Entre lo local y lo global* (2005), *Los españoles y las víctimas del terrorismo* (2005), *Los españoles y la universidad* (2004), *Los vascos y la política* (1994) and *Postfranquismo y fuerzas políticas en Euskadi. Sociología electoral del País Vasco* (1985).

Ideological Polarisation in Spain
La polarización ideológica en España

Luis Miguel Miller Moya
Institute of Public Goods and Policies (CSIC), Spain
luis.miller@csic.es

ABSTRACT

Ideological polarisation measures the degree of divergence in political identifications and opinions among different groups of citizens. Spain currently exhibits patterns of ideological polarisation comparable to those observed in other European countries. This type of polarisation has steadily increased throughout this century, leading to the formation of two distinct ideological blocs, whose potential voters differ in their positions on most key political issues. From a longitudinal perspective, polarisation on economic issues appears to have increased significantly more than that based on moral issues, the latter of which may have even declined over the past two decades. This suggests that if the main divisions are concentrated along the economic axis, the potential for reaching agreements should be greater than if differences were primarily intensified in the realm of moral issues. Debates over taxation, redistribution or even immigration policy may be more manageable than moral issues related to sexual identities or abortion, where positions tend to be more deeply rooted in principles and identity.

KEYWORDS: polarisation; ideology; public policy.

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.117

RESUMEN

La polarización ideológica mide las distancias entre las identificaciones y opiniones políticas de distintos grupos de ciudadanos. España muestra hoy unos patrones de polarización ideológica similares a otros países europeos. Este tipo de polarización ha aumentado de forma continua desde principios de siglo y se han configurado dos bloques ideológicos claros que se diferencian en el posicionamiento de sus potenciales votantes en la mayoría de temas que conforman el debate político. Si atendemos a una perspectiva longitudinal, la polarización en cuanto a temas económicos parece haber aumentado mucho más que la que se basa en temas morales. Esta última incluso podría haberse reducido en los últimas dos décadas. Podríamos concluir que, si las principales diferencias se establecen en el eje económico, la posibilidad de llegar a acuerdos debería estar más cerca que si se exacerban las diferencias en cuestiones morales. Las discusiones sobre impuestos, redistribución, incluso gestión de la inmigración, pueden ser más fáciles de abordar que cuestiones morales relacionadas con las identidades sexuales o el aborto, donde las posturas responden más a principios e identidades.

PALABRAS CLAVE: polarización; ideología; políticas públicas.

1. Introduction: the state of ideological polarisation in Spain

Ideological polarisation captures the extent to which the electorate holds divergent beliefs on ideological issues (such as feminism and environmentalism) or consistently aligns its views with left- or right-wing positions (e.g., endorsing left-wing perspectives on feminism or the environment, even if these positions are not extreme). Ideology functions as a heuristic or mental shortcut that enables individuals to navigate political complexities, particularly those related to social identities (such as social class, feminism or nationalism), political attitudes and party identification (Weber, 2011). Today, those on the left tend to believe that the state should intervene to address the problems generated by the market, maintaining taxes at a level that ensures a minimum degree of equity among all individuals within a given territory. By contrast, right-wing individuals tend to be sceptical of state intervention, both economically and socially, and favour lower taxes so that, in line with a frequently cited liberal *motto*, "money stays in the pockets of the citizens". Since the labels "left" and "right" are easy to understand and use, polarisation scholars initially focused on examining the extent to which societies were divided and in conflict between those who identify as left-wing and those who position themselves on the right (Sartori, 2003; Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008). In the most extensively studied case, the United States, Abramowitz (2022) demonstrates how political parties and elections have undergone profound transformations over the past half-century. The ideological divide between Democratic and Republican elites in Washington and most states has widened into a deep chasm in the 21st century.

Ideological alignment manifests both at the symbolic level—through identification with *left-right* or *liberalism-conservative* positions—and at the more practical level, in terms of stances on specific issues such as economic policy, immigration, social policies and climate change. Ideological polarisation has intensified across most Western democracies. In Spain, for instance, it has increased steadily in every election since the early 21st century. Moreover, this polarisation between left- and right-wing blocs is increasingly reflected in support for specific policies, such as taxation. Until 2015, there were minimal differences in tax preferences among voters of Spain's major political parties. Since then, however, positions on this issue have become sharply polarised.

This article focuses on ideological polarisation among voters. Other studies have examined the polarisation of political elites (Coller, 2024; Sánchez Ferrer and Torcal, 2024), which has also intensified in Spain in recent years. The polarisation of the elites has direct implications for voter polarisation. Rodríguez Teruel (2021) finds that voters who perceive less polarisation between parties are more likely to support more radical parties, whereas those who perceive greater polarisation between parties are more inclined to vote for moderate forces.

If we examine studies from the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, hereinafter) in Spain, ideological polarisation has continued to intensify in every general election since 2000 (Miller, 2023; Rodríguez-Virgili *et al.*, 2022; Simon, 2020). To quantify this trend, Figure 1 presents an ideological polarisation index calculated for each Spanish general election since the beginning of the century, following the most widely used formulation in the literature (Dalton, 2008), based on the CIS ideological self-placement scale. The question posed is as follows: "When discussing politics, the terms 'left' and 'right' are commonly used. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents 'the farthest left' and 10 'the farthest right', where would you place yourself?" On this scale, Vox voters position themselves above 7, while Sumar voters place themselves below 3. The greater the distance between voters of different parties, the higher the polarisation index presented in Figure 1. Over the course of this century, this indicator has risen by more than one point on a ten-point scale.

Figure 1

How ideological polarisation has increased in Spain this century

Polarización ideológica en España
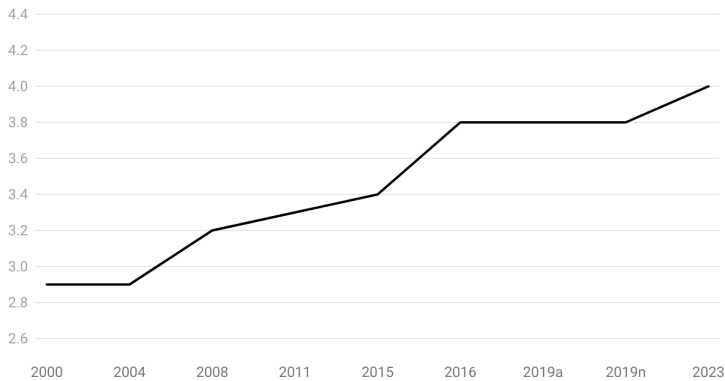
Source: own research based on CIS post-election barometers.

Ideological polarisation among voters of different parties—specifically, the extent to which individuals who report having voted for the Partido Popular position themselves on the ideological scale very differently from those who report having voted for the PSOE—has increased by approximately 40% over the course of this century (Miller, 2023). This rise in ideological polarisation has been particularly pronounced since 2011, coinciding with the emergence of new political parties. This is hardly surprising, as one of the defining features of the 15-M movement and, later, Podemos, was its criticism of the so-called *PPSOE*. The argument was that Spain's two dominant parties defended the same policies and that neither represented a genuine alternative to the political course set since the transition to democracy in the 1970s. With the intensification of ideological polarisation over the past decade, Spain has shifted from being a moderate country at the start of the century to one that is now highly polarised. For years, much was made of the Spanish exception, referring to the absence of a far-right party in Congress. However, in a country as politically volatile as Spain, we have moved from being a symbol of moderation in the 1990s to a prominent member of the club of highly polarised nations.

It is important to distinguish ideological polarisation from two other forms of political polarisation that I will not address in this contribution: affective polarisation and everyday polarisation. Affective polarisation does not focus on the ideological positioning of political parties and their voters but rather on the emotions that parties and political leaders evoke. It manifests as a stronger attachment to parties, leaders and voters with whom we identify, coupled with greater hostility

towards those with whom we do not share such affinity. Torcal (2023) has shown that affective polarisation in Spain is currently at its highest level since the 1990s, when data first became available for meaningful comparisons.

A third and final type of polarisation, everyday polarisation, refers to the growing social, demographic and geographical differentiation among voters of various parties. In our daily lives, we exist in bubbles, surrounded by people who are similar to us and who share our way of thinking. This dynamic reinforces the other two dimensions of polarisation. The division between individuals and groups with different partisan affiliations extends beyond ideological or emotional differences, shaping preferences, lifestyles and even residential patterns (Miller, 2024). In one of the most comprehensive studies on this topic, Harteveld (2021) examines the relationship between religion, income and education on the one hand, and political attitudes on the other, across forty countries over four decades. Religion emerges as one of the most significant variables in explaining alignment around political identities and sentiments, a phenomenon that has been extensively studied in the United States (Bishop and Cushing, 2008). In the US, the term "Christian Right" is used to describe the movement that unites the conservative wing of evangelical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, advocating socially conservative policies.

Crucially, these three forms of polarisation—ideological, affective and everyday—reinforce one another: parties become increasingly ideologically homogeneous, positive and negative emotions saturate political evaluations, and social and spatial segregation deepens along ideological lines. People tend to live in areas where they share aesthetic preferences, interests and ideology with their neighbours, and this homogeneity fosters an increasingly distorted and caricatured perception of those with different political views. My contribution to this debate will focus on the ideological component of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon of polarisation. To this end, I will first examine how the ideological positioning of voters across different political parties has evolved over this century. I will then explore what divides Spaniards ideologically today.

2. How have we changed?

In Spain, we lack large-scale longitudinal studies that would allow us, as in other countries, to trace the historical trajectory of changes in public opinion. However, we do have some scattered data series that enable us to outline certain trends in ideological polarisation. For instance, CIS barometers provide a means to track a limited set of variables over time, such as positioning on the left-right ideological scale, as mentioned earlier, or religious sentiment and practices. Additionally, some periodic surveys allow for comparisons over the past four decades, such as the CIS *Public Opinion and Fiscal Policy* study. However, the number of CIS data series that have remained continuous to the present day is limited.

Fortunately, we can draw on international surveys that offer a much broader range of variables, including longitudinal ideological markers of society. Among these, the European Social Survey (ESS) stands out as a key source. Spain has participated in all waves of the ESS, from the first in 2002 to the eleventh, which is set to be released in late 2024. The consistency of certain variables across each edition of the survey allows for an analysis of whether ideological positions within Spanish society have become more polarised. Specifically, Figure 2 illustrates changes over time in three issues that tend to polarise public opinion in other countries and for which Spain has twenty years of data, covering the first to the tenth wave of the ESS. These issues are: support for redistributive policies, support for the right of gay men and lesbians to live as they choose and attitudes towards immigrants. The first issue pertains to the socio-economic dimension of ideology, the second to a moral component and the third—immigration—encompasses economic, social and moral considerations.

Since its first edition, the ESS has asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels." Responses are recorded on a scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". As shown in Figure 2a, in 2002, 80% of Spaniards agreed (strongly or somewhat) with reducing income disparities. By 2022, this figure had fallen to 67%. However, beyond the overall shift towards lower support for income redistribution, the most significant development is that this economic issue has become the most polarised in Spain over the past two decades. In 2002, the difference between the most pro-redistribution voters (Izquierda Unida) and the least supportive (Partido Popular) was just 14 percentage points. By 2022, the gap between those most in favour of redistribution (Unidas Podemos voters) and those least supportive (Vox voters) had widened to 37 points. The gap between the most extreme positions—one of the standard measures of ideological polarisation in a political system—has more than doubled in this case. Even the difference between voters of the two moderate parties (Partido Popular and PSOE) has widened, increasing from 13 to 31 points. Taken as a whole, eight out of ten left-wing party voters today support income redistribution, while fewer than half of right-wing party voters do.

Another issue frequently examined in studies on ideological polarisation, particularly in countries such as the United States, is public opinion on sexual identities. The ESS has included the following statement in all its waves: "Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish." The response categories are the same as those used for the income redistribution question. As shown in Figure 2b, in contrast to the economic issue, agreement with this statement has increased significantly, rising from an average of 70% in 2002 to 92% in 2022. This increase has occurred across voters of all political parties. Meanwhile, polarisation on this issue (measured as the gap between the most extreme positions) has declined. In 2002, a 28-point difference separated Izquierda Unida voters from those of Partido Popular. By 2022, the difference

between Unidas Podemos and Vox voters had narrowed to 21 points. However, in this latter case, even among the least supportive voters, agreement approaches 80%, indicating that this is an issue of broad consensus and low polarisation in Spain.

Figure 2
Evolution of the acceptance of three ideological issues

2a: Redistribution

El gobierno debería igualar los ingresos
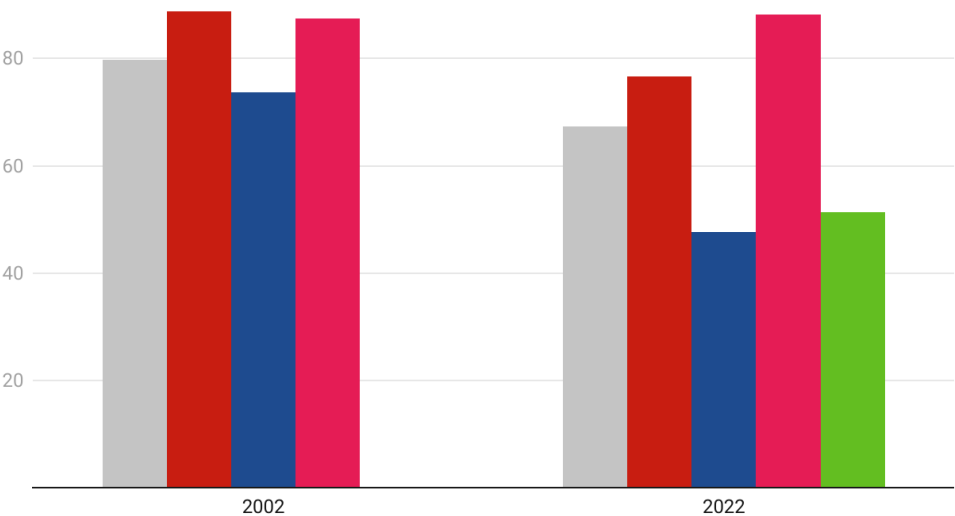
2b: Homosexuality

Los gays y lesbianas deberían tener libertad para vivir

Media   PSOE   PP   IU/Podemos   Vox
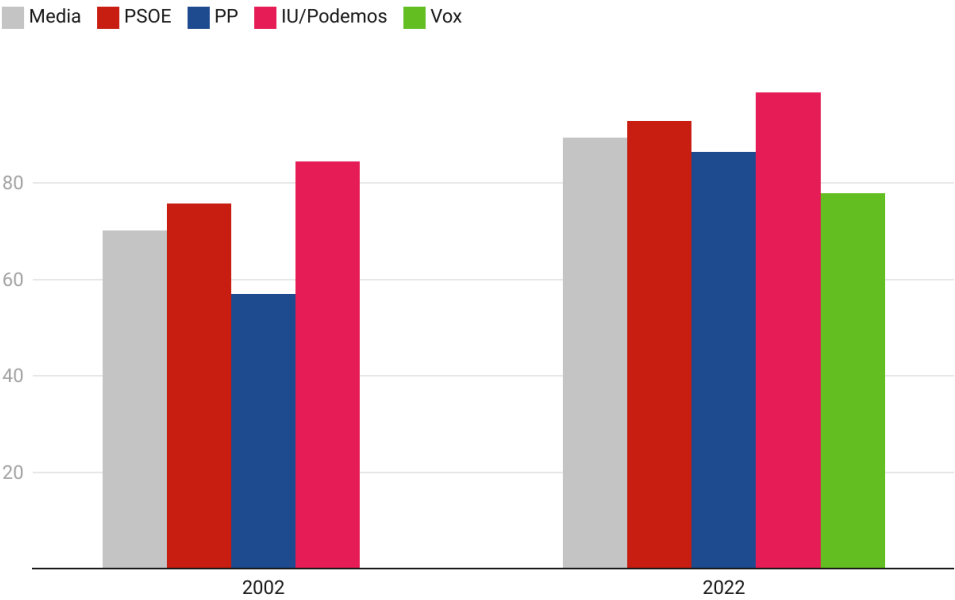
2c: Immigration

Se debería permitir la llegada de personas de países pobres

Media   PSOE   PP   IU/Podemos   Vox
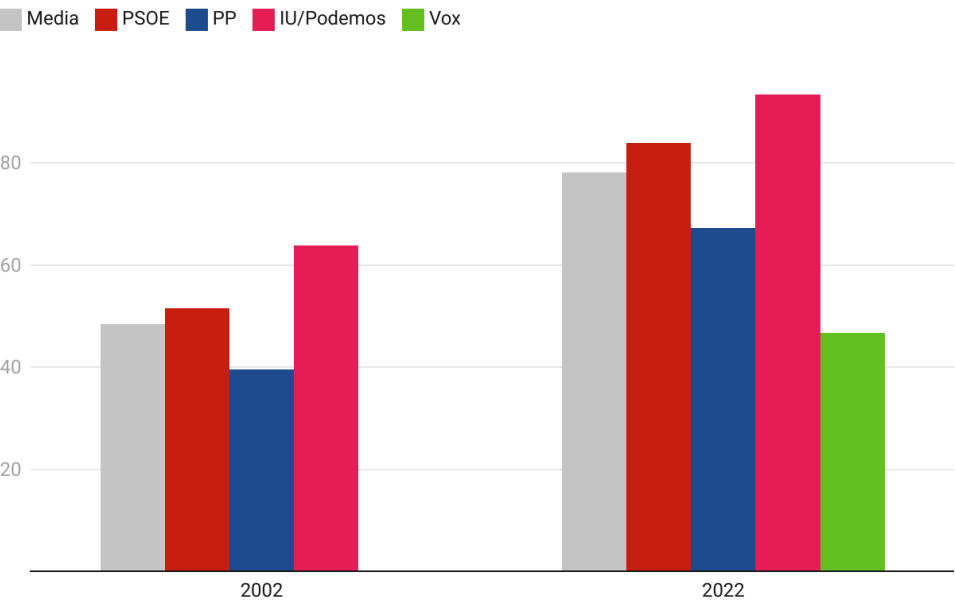
Source: own research based on waves 1 and 10 of the European Social Survey (ESS).

The third major issue in the debate on ideological polarisation, and one that has become a central rallying point for new radical right movements, is immigration. Since its inception, the ESS has included three questions concerning different types of migrants. The first question asks: "To what extent do you think Spain should allow people of the *same race or ethnic group* as most of Spain's people to come and live here?" The second and third questions replace the italicised group with "*a different race or ethnic group*" and "*people from poor countries outside Europe*", respectively. Responses to these questions are similar, though support for immigration is slightly higher in the first case than in the others. Figure 2c presents data for the third category, referring to people from poor countries outside Europe. Over the past two decades, public support for this type of immigration has risen by nearly 30 percentage points, increasing from 48% to 76%. At the same time, polarisation on this issue has intensified significantly. The gap between extreme positions (Izquierda Unida and Partido Popular voters) in 2002 stood at 24 points. By 2022, this gap had doubled, reaching 50 points, separating Unidas Podemos and Vox voters. According to the ESS, immigration has become the most divisive issue between left- and right-wing voters in Spain.

In summary, over the past two decades, two shifts have occurred in the ideological positioning of Spanish voters. The first is a general trend towards more liberal positions, both economically and socially. This is particularly notable among Partido Popular voters who, while deepening their opposition to egalitarian economic policies, have also moved towards more liberal views on issues such as homosexuality and immigration. The second shift, which is the focus of this article, is the considerable increase in polarisation on economic issues such as support for redistributive policies, as well as on topics with both economic and social implications, such as immigration. In other studies, I have shown that polarisation has also increased in other socio-economic areas in recent years, including attitudes towards taxation (Miller, 2020) and support for welfare state policies such as public healthcare (Miller, 2023). By contrast, over the same period, ideological polarisation has decreased regarding moral issues, particularly the right of gay men and lesbians to live as they wish. On this matter, society as a whole has moved towards greater social acceptance over the period under review.

3. Current divisions

As noted earlier, while few longitudinal data series are available to track the evolution of ideological polarisation in Spain concerning specific policies, several recent surveys provide insight into the current level of ideological division in the country. A key example is the two Prospective Surveys, conducted and published by the CIS in 2022. These surveys asked a representative sample of Spanish citizens about some of the major challenges and potential solutions that Spain is expected to face in the coming decades. Topics covered include

the future of education, the labour market, immigration and climate change. Unfortunately, while these surveys contain an extensive set of socio-economic questions, they do not address social and moral issues such as feminism.

To examine what divides Spaniards today, I will draw on data from the NORPOL project, funded by the Spanish State Research Agency. In June 2024, we conducted an *online* survey of a representative sample of 3,000 Spanish adults, focusing on various aspects of polarisation, particularly its everyday dimension. The survey was carried out by Netquest, with participants drawn from a panel sample. To improve representativeness, we applied quotas based on gender, age, autonomous community, municipality size and education level. Administering the survey online presents challenges to representativeness. Therefore, in the analysis that follows, the goal will be to compare responses across different topics rather than to make absolute claims about the entire Spanish population. All the questions included in the questionnaire were used in previous studies, both national and international.

Specifically, I will focus on a set of ten questions designed to capture some of the most significant ideological divides in Spain today. Table 1 presents the statements on which respondents were asked to take a position, using a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", as in the ESS.

Table 1
Ideological divides in Spain

Topic	Statement
Immigration	Immigrants should be required to integrate into our culture.
Territorial politics	Citizens should be able to hold a binding referendum on their autonomous community's status within the country.
European Union	European unification should be promoted.
Climate change	To combat climate change, taxes on fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) should be increased.
Gender equality	Gender equality measures have gone too far.
Housing	The government should impose a cap on rental prices.
Civil liberties	In emergency situations, it is justified for the state to restrict civil liberties.
Defence	Defence spending should be increased.
Homosexuality	Same-sex couples should have the same adoption rights as heterosexual couples.
Abortion	Abortion should be legal without restrictions.

Source: NORPOL study (Social Norms in Politics).

To assess the extent of ideological polarisation within a political system—whether in symbolic matters, such as positioning on the left-right scale, or in support for specific issues or policies—academic literature commonly relies on polarisation indices derived from Dalton's (2008) original formula. The methodology for calculating these indices varies across studies, but all measure the dispersion of citizens' opinions. If we apply the simplest measure of opinion dispersion, as used by Bartels (2023), we can establish a *ranking* of the issues that most and least divide Spanish society. According to our data, the most polarising issue in Spain today is gender equality policies, followed by territorial politics and abortion rights. By contrast, the least divisive issue is European integration, followed by immigrant integration and defence policy. Issues such as climate change, housing prices, civil liberties and same-sex adoption occupy an intermediate position in terms of public opinion division.

While the analysis shifts slightly when comparing the average opinions of voters from ideologically opposed parties, the overall picture of Spain as an ideologically polarised country remains unchanged. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 3, which presents the average opinion of the population (in black) alongside the average opinions of voters from Spain's four major national political groups: Partido Popular (blue), PSOE (red), Vox (green) and Sumar (magenta). The average positions for each of the ten potentially polarising issues listed in Table 1 are displayed. In seven out of ten issues, a clear left-right polarisation pattern emerges, with PSOE and Sumar voters positioned on one side of the average and Partido Popular and Vox voters on the other. This pattern is particularly evident in issues such as gender equality policies, immigration, same-sex adoption and abortion rights.

However, there are three issues where this alignment between ideological positioning and policy preferences does not fully hold. In territorial politics, PSOE voters are closer to Partido Popular and Vox voters and further from Sumar voters. The referendum issue, as framed in the survey, creates an internal territorial divide among PSOE voters, making their alignment with the left bloc less distinct. The second issue where there is no overlap between ideological positioning and support for concrete policy is European integration. In this case, Vox voters are the only group that is clearly anti-European, while voters of the two centrist parties (Partido Popular and PSOE) hold similar positions. Finally, with regard to the possibility of restricting civil liberties during emergencies, voters from the two newer political groups (Vox and Sumar) express lower support for such measures compared to those from the traditional parties. In conclusion, Spain today exhibits a general alignment between the ideological positioning of political parties and the opinions of their voters on specific issues, although some exceptions to this pattern exist.

Figure 3

Average agreement among voters of four political groups

Posición de la población general

● Media   ● PP   ● PSOE   ● VOX   ● SUMAR

Created with Datawrapper
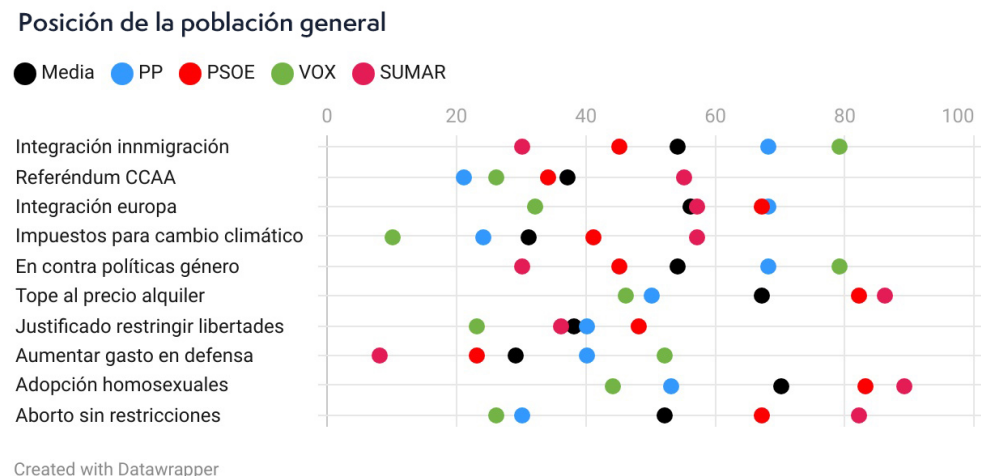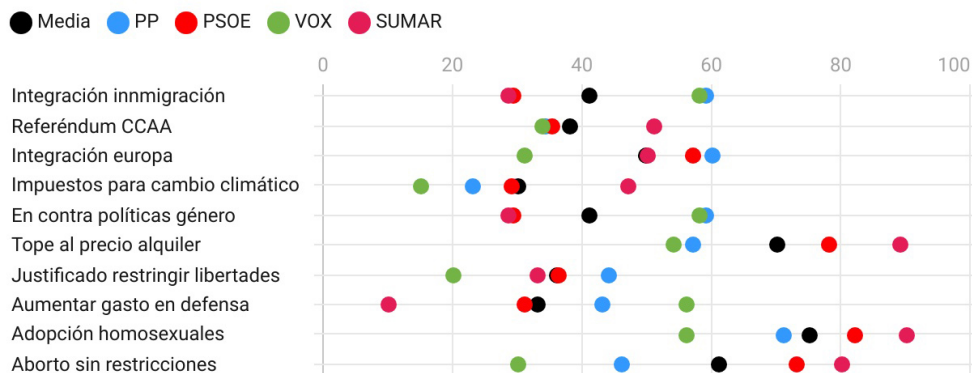
Source: own research using the NORPOL survey.

The data presented in Figure 3 reflect the general population, while Figure 4 focuses specifically on the opinions of young people, defined as those under 35 years old. In recent years, studies have increasingly highlighted age-specific patterns of ideological fragmentation. For example, research suggests that young men are shifting towards more conservative positions compared to previous generations (Lorente and Sánchez Vitores, 2022). The key question here is whether today's young people exhibit the same levels of affective polarisation as the broader population.

According to the NORPOL survey data shown in Figure 4, the ideological segmentation patterns among young people are largely similar to those observed in the general population. In six out of ten variables, Partido Popular and Vox voters are clearly positioned on one side of the national average, while PSOE and Sumar voters are positioned on the other. However, the main difference is that on issues such as gender equality policies and immigrant integration, the positions of left-wing and right-wing party voters are indistinguishable. This suggests that at a young age, left- and right-wing ideological identities tend to be stronger than partisan identification. Based on these findings, it appears that the stable division into left- and right-wing ideological blocs is here to stay. While the specific parties within each bloc may change over time, the fundamental division into two clearly defined political camps remains intact.

Figure 4

Average agreement among young voters of four political groups

Posición de los jóvenes

● Media   ● PP   ● PSOE   ● VOX   ● SUMAR

Created with Datawrapper

Source: own research using the NORPOL survey.

From an ideological perspective, young people play a more significant role in the two most politically extreme options in Spain's political landscape: Vox and Sumar. Young voters are more concentrated at the ideological extremes, which is not entirely surprising, as the youth demographic tends to be more ideologically polarised. However, much like in other areas of life, young people do not appear fundamentally different from older generations. They participate somewhat less in politics and are slightly more inclined to support parties at the ideological extremes, yet they are not more affectively polarised (Miller, 2023).

To better understand the links between economic precarity and political polarisation, we must broaden the scope beyond younger age groups alone. A previous academic study found that age itself is not the primary factor shaping young people's political and social preferences; rather, it is their relationship with the labour market (Demel *et al.*, 2019). For those still studying, ideological identification—being left- or right-wing—remains important. However, for those who have already entered the workforce, political ideology becomes less relevant, and the key factor shaping their views is their experience in the labour market. Those who are employed tend to believe in effort and meritocracy, whereas those who are unemployed place greater emphasis on equality. Few factors shape political attitudes more than direct confrontation with reality. Returning to the issue of age, Generation Z—those born this century—is the most accepting of immigration and represents the militant generation of diversity. This generation embraces post-materialist values, such as sexual diversity and climate change activism. In other words, as they have yet to fully enter the labour mar-

ket, their concerns are less focused on material issues such as the economy and employment. In reality, these data likely indicate that political attitudes in general, and the tendency towards polarisation in particular, are more closely linked to life stage than to age itself. Entering the labour market, starting a family or experiencing parenthood are pivotal life events that significantly shape individuals' relationship with politics. Nevertheless, according to our data, there is no clear evidence that younger generations depart from the broader patterns of ideological differentiation observed in the population as a whole.

4. Conclusions and discussion

Spain currently exhibits patterns of ideological polarisation comparable to those observed in other European countries. The level of ideological polarisation has steadily increased throughout this century, leading to the formation of two distinct ideological blocs, whose potential voters differ in their positions on most key political issues. From a longitudinal perspective, polarisation on economic issues appears to have increased significantly more than that based on moral issues, the latter of which may have even declined over the past two decades.

The data presented in this text, along with evidence from other cited sources, clearly indicate that the economic policy preferences of left- and right-wing voters have become increasingly polarised in recent years, now forming sharply differentiated ideological profiles. Within the left-wing bloc, support for higher taxes to facilitate an ambitious redistributive policy has increased. Conversely, within the right-wing bloc, opposition to taxation and state intervention in the economy has become more pronounced. This economic polarisation has steadily intensified in recent years, with no clear signs of a shift towards more centrist positions among voters or political leaders in either bloc. The economic axis is one of the two traditional dimensions used to study the polarisation of political preferences in other countries (Baldassarri and Glodberg, 2014).

The second dimension used to analyse political competition patterns is the moral axis, which encompasses issues such as feminism, sexual identities and abortion. However, the information available on the evolution of polarisation along this axis is less clear than in the economic dimension. On one hand, ESS data indicate a significant increase in consensus regarding tolerance towards homosexuality in Spain, with at least 80% of voters across all national political parties expressing support for this stance. However, issues such as same-sex adoption and abortion rights continue to polarise voters from left- and right-wing parties. Predicting how this division will evolve in Spain is challenging. Unlike economic issues, where polarisation has followed a steady trajectory, social consensus and dissent on moral issues appear to follow a more cyclical pattern. This suggests that, as in previous decades, periods of convergence in attitudes towards moral issues among different ideological groups will alternate with periods of intense confrontation over specific topics. Examples of the latter

include debates surrounding the Organic Law on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom—commonly known as the "only yes means yes" law, approved in August 2022—and the Law for the Real and Effective Equality of Trans People and the Guarantee of LGBTI Rights, known as the trans law, passed in December 2022.

If Spain has become ideologically polarised, with a more persistent divide along the economic axis and a more fluctuating one on moral issues, the key question remains: to what extent is this growing polarisation harmful to democracy? On this point, expert opinions are somewhat divided. On one hand, ideological polarisation is often regarded as beneficial for the proper functioning of democracy. A clearer ideological distinction between political parties and blocs enables citizens to better discern and choose between competing political options. On the other hand, as conservative and progressive voters drift further apart, reaching agreements on public policies may become increasingly difficult. This could lead to legislative gridlock, particularly in highly fragmented parliaments—a trend observed in Spain and other countries.

A positive takeaway from the analysis presented in this text is that if the main divisions are concentrated along the economic axis, the potential for reaching agreements should be greater than if differences were primarily intensified in the realm of moral issues. At first glance, it seems reasonable to assume that debates over taxation, redistribution or even immigration policy may be more manageable than moral issues related to sexual identities or abortion, where positions tend to be more deeply rooted in principles and identity. However, this remains an empirical question that, at least in Spain, has yet to be thoroughly explored.

5. Bibliography

Abramowitz, A. I. (2022). The Polarized American Electorate: The Rise of Partisan-Ideological Consistency and Its Consequences. *Political Science Quarterly*, 137, 645–674.

Abramowitz, A. I. and Saunders, K. L. (2008). Is Polarization a Myth? *The Journal of Politics*, 70/2, 542–555.

Baldassarri, D. and Goldberg, A. (2014). Neither Ideologues nor Agnostics: Alternative Voters' Belief System in an Age of Partisan Politics. *American Journal of Sociology, 120/1*, 45–95.

Bartels, L. (2023). *Democracy Erodes from the Top.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bishop, B. and Cushing, R. G. (2008). *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Coller, X. (2024). *La teatralización de la política.* Madrid: Catarata.

Dalton, R. J. (2008). The quantity and the quality of party systems: party system polarization, its measurement, and its consequences. *Comparative Political Studies,* 47/7, 899–920.

Demel, S., Barr, A., Miller, L. M. and Úbeda, P. (2019). Commitment to Political Ideology is a Luxury Only Students Can Afford: A Distributive Justice Experiment. *Journal of Experimental Political Science, 6*/1, 33–42.

Harteveld, E. (2021). Ticking all the boxes? A comparative study of social sorting and affective polarization. *Electoral Studies,* 72.

Lorente, J. and Sánchez-Vitores, I. (2022). ¿Giran a la derecha? La ideología de los jóvenes españoles desde la consolidación de la democracia hasta hoy. *Revista Internacional de Pensamiento Político,* 17, 117–134.

Miller, L. M. (2020). Polarización en España: más divididos por ideología e identidad que por políticas públicas. *EsadeEcPol Insight*, 18.

Miller, L. M. (2023). *Polarizados. La Política que nos divide.* Barcelona: Deusto.

Miller, L. M. (2024). La polarización cotidiana en España. *Revista de Occidente,* 521.

Rodríguez-Teruel, J. (2021). Polarization and Electoral Realignment: The Case of the Right-Wing Parties in Spain. *South European Society and Politics*, 25(3–4), 381–410.

Rodríguez-Virgili, J., Portilla-Manjón, I. and Sierra-Iso, A. (2022). Cuarenta años de polarización ideológica en España. *Revista Empresa y Humanismo, 25*/2, 75–103.

Sánchez-Ferrer, L. and Torcal, M. (2024). Affective Polarization and Consensus Building Among Parliamentary Elites. *American Behavioral Scientist.*

Sartori, G. (2003). *Partidos y sistemas de partidos: Marco para un análisis.* Madrid: Alianza.

Simón, P. (2020). The Multiple Spanish Elections of April and May 2019: The Impact of Territorial and Left-right Polarisation. *South European Society and Politics,* 25, 441–474.

Torcal, M. (2023). *De votantes a hooligans.* Madrid: Catarata.

Weber, W. (2011). Testing for Measurement Equivalence of Individuals' Left-Right Orientation. *Survey Research Methods, 5*/1, 1–10.

Luis Miguel Miller Moya

Luis Miguel Miller Moya holds a PhD in sociology and is a scientific researcher at the Institute of Public Goods and Policies, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). He has served as associate professor of economics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), researcher at the Max Planck Society and deputy director of the Centre for Experimental Social Sciences at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Polarizados. La política que nos divide* (Ediciones Deusto) and *Experimental Sociology. Outline of a Scientific Field* (Cambridge University Press). His research focuses on political polarisation and experimental methods, with regular publications in fields such as economics, political science, sociology, psychology and philosophy.

DEBATE/DEBATE: POLITICAL POLARISATION. A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH/
LA POLARIZACIÓN POLÍTICA. UN ENFOQUE MULTIDIMENSIONAL

Measuring Identity Polarisation in Spain. Comparative Analysis of Pluralist and Peripheral Approaches

La medición de la polarización identitaria en España. Análisis comparativo de los enfoques pluralista y periférico

José Manuel León-Ranero
University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain
josemanuel.leon@ehu.es

ABSTRACT

This article examines the measurement of identity-based polarisation in Spain and evaluates the validity of the methods employed to study this phenomenon. Through an analysis of individual-level survey data from the CIS, CEO, ICPS and Euskobarómetro (Basque barometer), which explore citizens' definition of identity, the study concludes that of the two primary approaches to measuring identity-based polarisation—pluralist or bipolar and peripheral or unipolar—the former provides a more accurate representation of regions experiencing centre-periphery tensions. The bipolar approach more effectively captures the positioning of Spanish-identifying and dual identities, which are not solely characterised by their rejection of peripheral nationalism. This research offers greater insight into identity dynamics in Spain and contributes to the advancement of discussions on identity-based polarisation measurement methods.

The English version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.118

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza cómo se mide la polarización identitaria en España y evalúa la validez de los métodos de medición empleados para estudiar este tipo de polarización. A través del análisis de datos individuales de encuesta del CIS, el CEO, el ICPS y el Euskobarómetro que tratan la definición identitaria de los ciudadanos, se concluye que de las dos formas de medir la polarización identitaria, la pluralista o bipolar y la periférica o unipolar, la que mejor se aproxima a la realidad de regiones con tensiones centro-periferia es la primera, al captar mejor el posicionamiento de las identidades españolistas y duales, que no se definen únicamente por su rechazo al nacionalismo periférico. La investigación tiene relevancia para una mejor comprensión del fenómeno identitario en España y supone un avance en la discusión de los métodos de medición de la polarización identitaria.

PALABRAS CLAVE: centro-periferia; medición; polarización identitaria; identidad nacional; nacionalismo; españolismo; España.

1. Introduction

Identity-based polarisation, also known as the centre-periphery *cleavage*, is a form of social division rooted in membership of ethnic, cultural or subnational groups. It differs from other types of polarisation, such as ideological or cultural polarisation, in its emphasis on group identity and a sense of belonging to a specific community. Alongside the traditional left-right divide, it constitutes one of the primary axes of political segmentation in societies with two distinct national identities (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), as seen in the Catalan, Basque and Galician contexts (Canal, 2018; Leonisio and Strijbis, 2011; Pallarés, Montero and Llera, 1998; Rivera, 2018).

Since the late 19th century, these regions have experienced the coexistence of three forms of patriotism—local, regional or provincial, and national—which, depending on the institution, organisation or individual, may either cooperate, fostering dual identities, or enter into conflict (Linz, 1973; Pallarés, Montero and Llera, 1998). In recent years, within the context of a dual socio-economic and political-institutional crisis, identity-based polarisation has intensified, driven by the Catalan independence movement (2010–2017) and the electoral rise of nationalist parties in the Basque Country and Galicia following the restructuring of the Spanish party system at both national and regional levels.

Identity-based polarisation is particularly relevant as it can contribute to citizens' rejection of out-groups. While group affiliation is fundamental to shaping an individual's social identity (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971), it can also lead to the formation of closed communities and increased distrust towards out-groups (Mason, 2018), potentially undermining political stability. In Spain, identity-based polarisation is evident in the tension between regional and national identities (Linz, 1973). The subnational–national divide has thus become a major source of political con-

flict (Rodríguez, Santamaría and Miller, 2022; Torcal and Comellas, 2022) and has contributed to making Spain one of the most affectively polarised societies in Europe (Gidron, Adams and Horne, 2020).

The aim of this article is to describe, analyse and compare methods for measuring identity-based polarisation in Spain and to assess their validity. The article is structured as follows: first, it presents a theoretical framework that defines identity-based polarisation, reviews existing literature and examines the Catalan, Basque and Galician cases. It then explores the measurement approaches used by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS), the Catalan Centre for Opinion Studies (CEO), the Institute of Political and Social Sciences (ICPS) and the Euskobarómetro (Basque barometer). Next, the results of these surveys are compared in the Catalan and Basque cases—where both unipolar and bipolar measurement approaches are available—using bivariate and multivariate statistical methods to identify patterns and trends in identity-based polarisation in Spain. Finally, the validity of these measurement methods is evaluated, along with the methodological implications of the findings.

2. The centre-periphery conflict, national identity and nationalist movements in Spain

2.1. The centre-periphery tension

The centre-periphery *cleavage* has been recognised as a key factor in shaping the nature of political systems (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rovny, 2015). This tension arises between pro-centre positions, which advocate for maintaining national unity and, at times, promoting national sentiment, and pro-periphery positions, which encompass institutional rules, beliefs and collective behaviours that assert and reinforce the notions of uniqueness, autonomy and self-government for certain territories. For peripheral nationalism to achieve political articulation, it requires the presence of a national-regional consciousness, a centre-periphery conflict—whether cultural, economic and/or political—and social mobilisation alongside relevant political organisations (Moreno and Giner, 1990).

The defence of uniqueness and self-government stems from the concept of the nation, which, for nationalism, is pre-political. The nation is understood as a social construct or an imagined community, shaped by cultural symbols, languages, histories and traditions that contribute to the mental construction of a shared identity (Anderson, 1991) and the division between "us" and "them" (Llera, 2002). This perspective helps explain the mistaken assumption that sharing common characteristics—such as ancestry, language, religion and/or culture—necessarily implies the existence of a shared national identity and/or a desire for independence (Linz, 1999). Indeed, in many cases, either a majority or significant minorities express dual identities (Linz, 1985a, 1986, 1999; Llera, 2002).

In Spain, the origins of the centre-periphery debate are linked to the loss of the empire, the discrediting of the liberal-centrist state and the failures of the Industrial Revolution (Linz, 1993; Moreno and Giner, 1990). Historically, peripheral demands have been driven by "the loss or defence of privileges or the traditional status of certain local power elites, who find in identity construction the most effective means of rallying support in their struggle against the interests promoted by the modernising convergence of centralism and constitutional liberalism" (Llera, 2020, p. 187 [translation]).

With the globalisation and Europeanisation of societies, recent decades have witnessed a resurgence of nationalist movements (Agnew, 2000; Keating, 2004). Although Spain's socio-economic transformation—marked by democratic consolidation, integration into the European Union and the long process of regional devolution—brought nationalist movements into the framework of national governance (Liebert, 1990), economic fragility, weak national leadership, political corruption and the fragmentation of the national party system have further polarised pro-periphery positions, particularly in Catalonia. However, this does not invalidate the thesis of the limitations of peripheral nationalism, which arise from its retreat into a linguistic-territorial community, the persistence of dual identities and the impact of immigration (Linz, 1993).

Identity-based polarisation has significant implications for politics and social cohesion. As with ideological and cultural polarisation, extreme alignment around exclusive group identities—whether ethnic, cultural and/or subnational—not only fosters animosity towards the "other" (Mason, 2018) but also contributes to government instability, difficulties in forming majorities, a decline in democratic quality and institutional trust and, ultimately, the systemic collapse of democratic regimes (Casal, 2019; McCoy, Rahman and Somer, 2018). In Spain, identity-based polarisation has played a crucial role in processes such as the Ibarretxe Plan (2001–2005) (Llera, 2005) and the Catalan independence challenge (2010–2017), significantly impacting social polarisation, governance and democratic quality (Milián, 2021).

2.2. The Catalan, Basque and Galician cases

In Catalonia, politics is structured around both socio-economic and centre-periphery divisions. The emergence of Catalan nationalism is linked to the early development of indigenous capitalism and industrialisation (Llera, 2020; Moreno and Giner, 1990). As Díez (1999) notes, Catalonia's economic development was endogenous, rooted in capital accumulated from agriculture, which was later invested in industry, particularly in the textile sector. Catalonia's economy, benefiting from its peripheral location (Llera, 2020), became closely tied to the production of consumer goods, fostering the growth of a substantial bourgeois class engaged in commercial and industrial activities while integrating pre-industrial classes into this development.

Although dual forms of national identification have predominated since the establishment of democracy (Llera, 2020), the nationalising efforts led by the bourgeoisie that embraced

Catalan nationalism (Barrio, Barberá and Rodríguez, 2018) have been effective. Since the late 1990s, the centre-periphery divide has deepened (Barrio, Barberá and Rodríguez, 2018), and the proportion of the population identifying exclusively as Catalan has steadily increased (Quiroga and Molina, 2020). Indeed, nationalist-led regional governments have leveraged their influence and bargaining power (Llera, 2020) to advance a nationalisation project. This effort, which remained largely uncontested by non-nationalist actors until the emergence of the independence challenge (*ibid.*), has drawn on regional media, institutionalised collective memory, language policy and a reconstructed nationalist rhetoric centred on the narrative of "Catalonia's plundering" (Quiroga and Molina, 2020).

With the Great Recession of 2008, and particularly from 2010 onwards, support for independence rose significantly. This can be attributed, first, to the role of nationalist political elites and their strategies for fostering polarisation (Jaráiz, Lagares and Barreiro, 2017; Lagares, Máiz and Rivera, 2022; Llera, 2020). Second, the economic crisis and its adverse effects may have reinforced the narrative of Catalonia's dispossession (Barrio, Barberá and Rodríguez, 2018; Quiroga and Molina, 2020; Llera, 2020). Another contributing factor was the 2010 ruling by the Constitutional Court, which declared parts of the reformed Statute of Autonomy unconstitutional, an outcome widely perceived as an affront (Barrio, Barberá and Rodríguez, 2018; Burg, 2015; Llera, 2020). The rejection of negotiations over an economic agreement by the national government led by the Partido Popular (2011–2018) (Llera, 2020) may have further exacerbated tensions. Finally, political corruption scandals were leveraged as a source of grievance against the central government (Barrio, Barberá and Rodríguez, 2018; Quiroga and Molina, 2020; Llera, 2020).

As in Catalonia, the emergence of Basque nationalism is linked to the early development of ways of life distinct from the traditional rural economy (Moreno and Giner, 1990). In this case, economic development was "combined", featuring both an emerging Basque industrial sector, centred on mining and steel production, and a more traditional economic structure. Unlike in Catalonia, the Basque bourgeoisie originated from the traditional landowning aristocracy (Llera, 2020), which was smaller, more powerful and more closely connected to and dependent on the Spanish national elite. This combined model contributed to the emergence of an industrial and suburban proletariat (*ibid.*), leading a segment of society to embrace an independence-driven and anti-capitalist discourse during the late Francoist period.

The Basque nationalism–Spanish nationalism axis has dominated the polarised pluralism of the Basque political system (Llera, 2016), shaping competition along the ideological left-right spectrum (Leonisio, 2016). The heightened polarisation along this axis has been largely driven by the presence of anti-system factions, rooted in a subculture of violence, that have endorsed terrorism and political violence (Llera, 2002, 2003). ETA terrorism has played a role in the ethnic cleansing of distinct social and political groups and in fostering a spiral of silence (Llera, 2020; Llera, García and León-Ranero, 2022).

A dual Basque-Spanish identity has remained predominant, though pure Spanish nationalism is more marginal than Basque nationalism (Llera, 2020; Rivera, 2018). For this reason, despite being a nationalist party, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) has positioned

itself at the centre of political competition, maintaining a relatively ambiguous stance on identity, except during the period of the Lizarra Pact (Llera, Leonisio, García and Pérez, 2014). Nonetheless, Basque citizens generally support the governance and vision of Basque nationalism, as well as its distinct policies. It can thus be said that "the Basque Country is (predominantly) a nationalist society, but one of (mostly) non-nationalist citizens" (Rivera, 2018, p. 135 [translation]). This predominance has facilitated the implementation of a Basque nation-building process or the territorialisation of autonomy, despite its evident limitations (Rivera, 2018). Such a process complicates coexistence in the region for those who do not see the need to adopt an exclusive national identity (Lamo de Espinosa, 2007).

Lastly, Galician electoral behaviour and the region's party system follow, as in other areas, the eccentric model (Vallès, 1991), in which a non-negligible segment of the electorate supports pro-periphery forces. However, unlike in other regions with centre-periphery conflicts, the predominance of nationally oriented right-, centre- and left-wing parties—which remain competitive among segments with Galicianist and dual identities (Ares and Rama, 2019)—has resulted in the marginalisation of Galician regionalist and nationalist parties (PANE). Indeed, the paradoxical weakness of Galician nationalism (Linz, 1993) explains why the process of regional autonomy has lacked both strategies of influence over the political centre and leverage tactics, with the only nationalist party having participated in the regional government on just one occasion.

As in Catalonia and the Basque Country, dual Spanish-Galician identification is predominant in the region (Moreno and Giner, 1990), while the segment of the population identifying exclusively as Spanish remains marginal. This "diffuse sense of a distinct people" (Máiz, 1996, p. 69 [translation]) is rooted in the ethno-linguistic differences of part of the population compared to other regions. The recognition of this reality by nationally oriented parties has led to the only explicitly peripheral political offering combining left-wing extremism—of communist origins—with a peripheral, working-class nationalism closely tied to the linguistic issue (Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne, 2022).

3. Methods for measuring identity-based polarisation

Various methodologies have been developed to analyse and measure identity-based polarisation. Among studies that approach nationalism "from below" (Hobsbawm, 1991), opinion surveys are commonly used, as they enable the assessment of citizens' perceptions and preferences regarding national identity, attitudes towards other autonomous communities and views on independence or autonomy (Centre for Opinion Studies, 2024; Centre for Sociological Research, 2024; Euskobarómetro, 2024; Institute of Political and Social Sciences, 2024).

These studies were early adopters of the indicator introduced by Juan J. Linz (Linz, 1985b; Linz *et al.*, 1981, 1986), which consists of five bipolar categories reflecting varying intensities of national identification: Spanish only, more Spanish than (demonym), as (demonym) as Spanish, more (demonym) than Spanish and (demonym) only. Additionally, identity-based polarisation has been measured using two

further approaches, which we will refer to as the *peripheral* or *unipolar*[1] *model and the pluralist* or *bipolar*[2] model. The former assesses respondents' self–perception as more or less aligned with peripheral nationalism (Kasianenko, 2020), while the latter establishes a dialectical relationship between nationalist and Spanish–identifying positions within the centre–periphery *cleavage (Rokkan, 1967).* Of the four public opinion institutes that have applied these methods in Spain, the CIS (Centre for Sociological Research) and the ICPS (Institute of Political and Social Sciences) have used only the *unipolar* approach, while the CEO (Centre for Opinion Studies) and the Euskobarómetro (Basque barometer) have exclusively employed the *bipolar* method.

3.1. Catalonia

In Catalonia, three public opinion institutes have sought to measure identity–based polarisation (see Figure 1). The longest–running effort is that of the CIS, which, as in other regions with identity–related tensions, has applied the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale, ranging from 1 to 10, since 1991 (Centre for Sociological Research, 2024). More recent are the measurements conducted by the CEO, which operates under the Catalan regional government, and the ICPS, affiliated with the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The CEO has used the Spanish Nationalism–Catalan Nationalism Scale, ranging from 0 to 10, from 2014 to 2017 (Centre for Opinion Studies, 2024), while the ICPS has applied the Minimum–Maximum Catalan Nationalist Sentiment Scale, also ranging from 1 to 10[3], from 2015 to 2019 (Institute of Political and Social Sciences, 2024).

Figure 1

Evolution of polarisation in the CIS Minimum-Maximum Catalan Nationalism Scale (1991-2021), the CEO Catalan Nationalism-Spanish Nationalism Scale (2014-2017) and the ICPS Minimum-Maximum Catalan Nationalist Sentiment Scale (2016-2019)
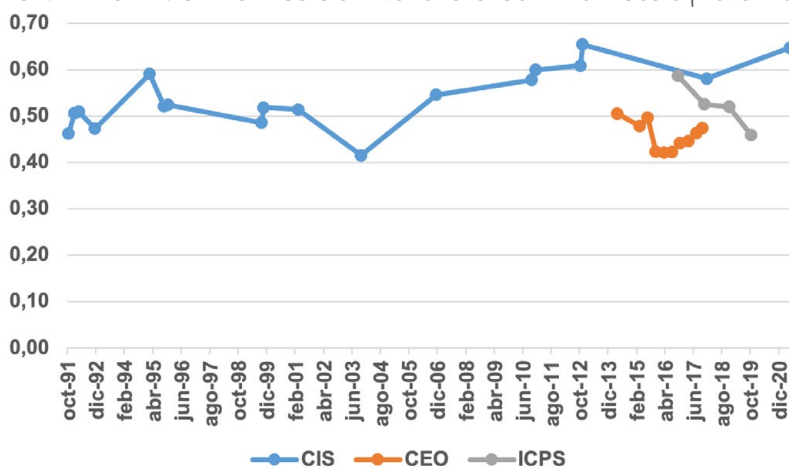
Note: in the case of the ICPS, additional data from 2008 has been excluded due to the use of a 0–10 scale, as well as data from 2016 (see Note 2).

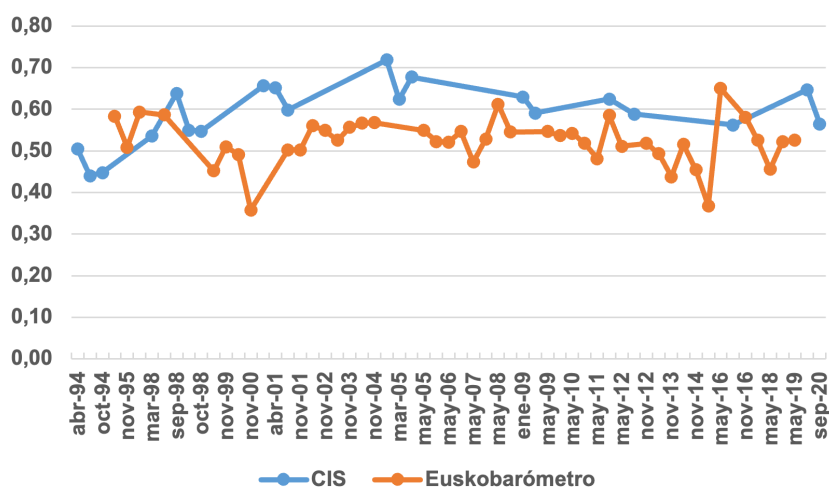Source: own research based on data from the CIS, CEO and ICPS.

The polarisation level on the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale averages 0.54 over the entire period. This indicator rises from a historic low of 0.43 in 2003 to a historic high of 0.65 in both 2012 and 2021, reflecting the prolonged period of the independence challenge (2010–2017). By contrast, the CEO scale records a slightly lower mean polarisation of 0.46 for the period 2014–2017, a difference that may stem from the distinct nature of the two scales. Meanwhile, the ICPS scale places mean polarisation at 0.52 between 2016 and 2019. The evolution of these last two indicators shows an increase in polarisation from 2015 to 2017 (rising from 0.42 to 0.47) followed by a decline after the unilateral declaration of independence, from 0.59 in 2016 to 0.46 in 2019.

3.2. Basque Country

In the Basque Country, two[4] public opinion institutes have measured identity-based polarisation (see Figure 2). Once again, the CIS has applied the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale, ranging from 1 to 10, from 1994 to 2020 (Centre for Sociological Research, 2024). Notably, this scale was not continued in the most recent 2024 regional elections. Additionally, the Euskobarómetro, a research group led by Professor Francisco J. Llera at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), conducted a biannual barometer between 1995 and 2019[5], using the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale, also measured on a scale from 1 to 10 (Euskobarómetro, 2024; Llera, Leonisio, García and Pérez, 2014). This *bipolar* scale, parallel to the ideological scale, was used exclusively by this research group for more than twenty years until its later adoption in Catalonia by the CEO. It remains distinct from the *unipolar* scale.

Figure 2

Evolution of polarisation in the CIS Minimum-Maximum Basque Nationalism Scale (1994-2020) and the Euskobarómetro Nationalism-Spanish Nationalism Scale (1995-2019)

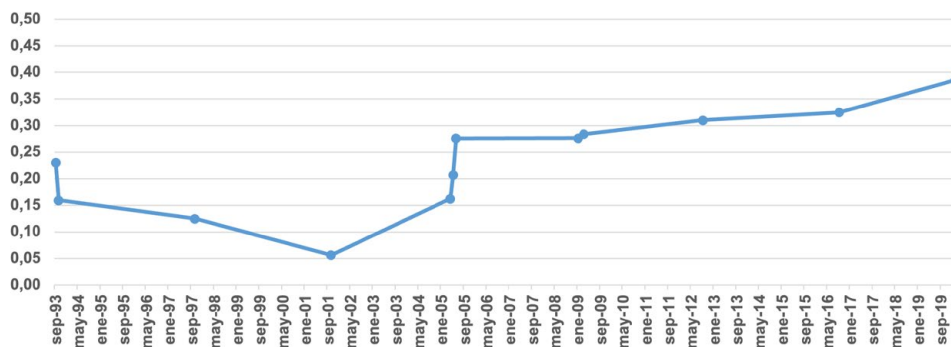Source: own research based on data from the CIS and Euskobarómetro.

The mean polarisation level on the CIS scale from 1994 to 2020 is relatively high, standing at 0.59. This indicator increased from 0.44 in 1994 to 0.72 in 2005, reflecting the shift in Basque nationalist political strategies following the Estella Pact (1998) and the Ibarretxe Plan (2001–2005). A similar trend is observed in the Euskobarómetro indicator, which rose from 0.45 in 1999 to 0.55 in 2004. Other notable increases in identity-based polarisation occurred in 2008, towards the end of Ibarretxe's government period, in 2011, coinciding with López's administration and in 2016, during Urkullu's tenure. The mean polarisation level on the *bipolar* scale is 0.52, slightly lower than that of the CIS scale, mirroring the pattern observed in Catalonia.

3.3. Galicia

In Galicia, only one public opinion institute has attempted to measure identity-based polarisation. As in Catalonia and the Basque Country, this has been conducted by the CIS, which has applied the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale, ranging from 1 to 10, from 1993 to the present (Centre for Sociological Research, 2024).

Figure 3

Evolution of polarisation in the CIS Minimum-Maximum Galician Nationalism Scale (1993-2020)

Source: own research based on data from the CIS.

The mean polarisation level on this axis for the period 1993–2020 stands at 0.23, indicating significantly lower identity-based tensions in Galicia compared to Catalonia and the Basque Country. This is largely attributable to the Galicianist strategy of the Partido Popular (PP) in the region, which has helped mitigate polarisation despite the radical stance of the Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG) on this axis. However, a gradual increase in polarisation is evident, rising from a low of 0.1 in 2001 to a high of 0.39 in 2020, a trend largely driven by the Galician PP's shift towards minimal nationalism. Finally, despite the significance of the Galician case, it will be excluded from the comparative analysis of measurement methods, which is the primary focus of this article, as only *unipolar* measurements of identity-based polarisation are available for this region.

4. Data and measurement

To identify the tools used to measure identity-based polarisation in Spain and assess which is most valid for analysing the identity structure of regions with two national identities, five databases were constructed. Three were based on CIS regional studies in Catalonia (1991–2021)[6], the Basque Country (1994–2020)[7] and Galicia (1992–2019)[8], one was derived from CEO studies (2014–2017)[9] and another from Euskobarómetro studies (1995–2019)[10]. Additionally, the integrated database provided by the ICPS (2015–2019) was utilised[11]. The selection criterion for the databases was to maximise the number of cases included: any regional study containing at least one of the scales under analysis was incorporated, i.e., the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale or Nationalist Sentiment Scale, the Catalan Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale and the (Basque) Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale.

Once the databases were constructed, the order of the scales was adjusted to facilitate the interpretation of results as follows: Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale, Catalan Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale and Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale. In all cases, the scales were standardised to a 1–10 format. For the CEO Catalan Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale, originally ranging from 0–10, the data was adjusted to a 1–10 scale to ensure consistency across measurements[12].

In addition to the aforementioned scale variables, the following variables were collected when available[13], with their categories presented in the exact order in which they were recorded or recategorised: *Subjective national identity* (Spanish only, more Spanish than Catalan/Basque, as Catalan/Basque as Spanish, more Catalan/Basque than Spanish and Catalan/Basque only), *Nationalist sentiment* (yes/no), *Vote recall* (non-nationalist right, PSE-EE/PSC, PNV/CiU[14], left-wing Basque nationalist / ERC and others), *Gender* (male/female), *Age* (numeric), *Educational attainment* (no formal education, primary education, secondary education, vocational training and higher education) and *Province* (Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona / Álava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa).

After calculating identity-based polarisation[15], the study focused on comparing *unipolar* (CIS) and *bipolar* (CEO and Euskobarómetro) measurements in the Catalan and Basque cases. The Galician case was thus excluded due to the availability of only *unipolar* measurement from the CIS. First, a comparison of means was conducted for the subgroups of *Subjective national identity*, *Nationalist sentiment* and *Vote recall* in both territories (excluding the second variable in the Catalan case, as it was unavailable), along with *post-hoc* indicator calculations. Second, two pairs of linear regression models were constructed—one for the Catalan case[16] and another for the Basque case—to analyse the determinants of the *unipolar* and *bipolar*[17] scales. In these models, the dependent variables were the scales, introduced as previously described. The key independent variables were the *dummy* categories for *Subjective national identity:* "Spanish only", "more Spanish than Catalan/Basque", "as Catalan/Basque as Spanish", "more Catalan/Basque than Spanish", with "Catalan/Basque only" as the reference category. Potential collinearity between *Subjective national identity* and the

Scales was analysed (see Note 2 in Tables 2 and 3). Additional independent variables included *Vote recall*, *Gender*, *Age* (numeric), *Educational attainment* and *Province*, all introduced as previously described, with the last category serving as the reference.

5. Results

5.1. Bivariate analysis

Table 1 presents the mean values on the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale and the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale, disaggregated by *Subjective national identity*, *Nationalist sentiment* and *Vote recall*. The data for Catalonia and the Basque Country are detailed, along with differences in means obtained from different surveys (CIS, CEO and Euskobarómetro).

Table 1

Mean scores on the Minimum-Maximum Nationalism and Nationalism-Spanish Nationalism Scales by Subjective national identity, Nationalist sentiment and Vote recall

	Catalonia			Basque Country		
	CIS	CEO	Diff.	CIS	Euskobarómetro	Diff.
Subjective national identity						
I feel only Spanish	9	7.7	1.3	8.8	7.1	1.7
I feel more Spanish than Catalan/Basque	8.7	7.1	1.6	8.4	6.5	1.9
I feel as Catalan/Basque as Spanish	6.9	5.6	1.3	6.9	5.1	1.8
I feel more Catalan/Basque than Spanish	3.8	3.6	0.2	4.5	3.6	0.9
I feel only Catalan/Basque	2.3	2.1	0.2	2.9	2.4	0.5
N	11,423	15,868	-	30,122	49,163	-
Nationalist sentiment						
Yes	-	-	-	3.3	2.8	0.5
No	-	-	-	8.1	5.4	2.7
N	-	-	-	16,990	47,897	-
Vote recall						
Non-nationalist right	8.3	6.6	1.7	8.3	6.8	1.5
PSC/PSE-EE	7	5.7	1.3	7.5	5.7	1.8
CiU/PNV	3.4	3.1	0.3	4	3.3	0.7
ERC/IA	2.7	2.4	0.3	2.9	2.1	0.8
Other	5.6	4.3	1.3	5.9	4	1.9
N	8,931	14,547	-	25,042	32,159	-

Note: One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine the relationships between the three independent variables and the scales. The results indicate that the differences are highly significant across groups for *Vote recall* ($p < 0.001$), *Nationalist sentiment* ($p < 0.001$) and *Subjective national identity* ($p < 0.001$), suggesting a strong association between these independent variables and positioning on the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism and Minimum–Maximum Nationalism scales. Scheffé tests confirm that differences between all pairs of groups are statistically significant.

Source: own research based on data from the CIS, CEO and Euskobarómetro.

In Catalonia, the mean positions of *Subjective national identity* subgroups vary significantly between scales. While the Spanish-identifying and dual-identity groups score substantially higher on the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale than on the Catalan Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale (with differences ranging from 1.3 to 1.6 points in favour of the former), Catalan-identifying subgroups exhibit very similar mean scores on both scales, with minimal differences of 0.2 points.

Regarding *Vote recall*, the mean positions of different electorates also differ. Voters of the non-nationalist right, the PSC and other parties score significantly higher on the CIS Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale compared to the Catalan Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale (with differences ranging from 1.3 to 1.7 points in favour of the former). In contrast, centre-right Catalan nationalist and ERC voters display very similar mean scores on both scales, with minimal differences of 0.3 points.

In the Basque Country, the mean positions of Subjective national identity subgroups also differ across scales. While the Spanish-identifying and dual-identity groups score significantly higher on the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale than on the Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale (with differences ranging from 1.7 to 1.9 points in favour of the former), Basque-identifying subgroups exhibit very similar scores on both scales, with minimal differences ranging from 0.5 to 0.9 points. A similar pattern is observed in relation to *Nationalist sentiment*. While nationalists maintain comparable positions on both scales (difference of 0.5 points), non-nationalists position themselves differently, exhibiting greater polarisation on the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale compared to the Euskobarómetro Scale (with a difference of 2.7 points).

Regarding *Vote recall*, the mean positions of electorates also vary. Voters of the non-nationalist right, the PSE-EE and other parties score notably higher on the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale than on the Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale (with differences ranging from 1.5 to 1.9 points in favour of the former). In contrast, voters of the nationalist centre-right and IA register very similar mean scores on both scales, with minimal differences of 0.7 to 0.8 points.

5.2. Multivariate analysis

Table 2 presents the linear regression models for the Catalonia scales (CIS and CEO). In the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale model, the R^2 coefficient is 0.565, while in the Catalan Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale model, it is 0.498. This indicates that the CIS and CEO models explain 56.5% and 49.8% of the variability in the dependent variable, respectively. Both models therefore exhibit good levels of fit.

Table 2

Linear regression models for the CIS Minimum-Maximum Nationalism Scale and the CEO Catalan Nationalism-Spanish Nationalism Scale

	CIS		CEO	
	Beta	Standard error	Beta	Standard error
Subjective national identity				
Spanish only	5.635***	0.094	4.823***	0.068
More Spanish than Catalan	5.256***	0.100	4.348***	0.07
As Catalan as Spanish	3.758***	0.058	3.011***	0.039
More Catalan than Spanish	1.363***	0.055	1.395***	0.038
(Ref.: Catalan only)				
Vote recall				
Non-nationalist right	1.244***	0.066	0.912***	0.0544
PSC	0.360***	0.068	0.34***	0.049
CiU	-0.936***	0.054	-0.210***	0.047
ERC	-1.052***	0.066	-0.449***	0.045
(Ref.: Other)				
Gender (Ref.: Female)	-0.049	0.039	0.042	0.028
Age	-0.002	0.001	-0.002***	0.001
Educational attainment				
No formal education	0.338**	0.11	0.667***	0.191
Primary education	0.129*	0.064	0.150***	0.042
VT	-0.043	0.0539	-0.0475	0.038
Higher education	-0.009	0.0515	-0.1679***	0.036
(Ref.: Secondary education)				
Province				
Barcelona	0.272***	0.055	0.002	0.04
Girona	0.071	0.0654	-0.208***	0.051
Lleida	0.115	0.0655	-0.005	0.052
(Ref.: Tarragona)				
(Constant)	2.907***	0.107	2.356***	0.07
R^2	0.565		0.498	
N	11,401		16,159	

Note 1: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note 2: Three diagnostic tools were applied to detect potential collinearity issues between Subjective national identity and identity scales. The Variance Inflation Factor was 1 in all cases, Tolerance was consistently 1 and correlations were always below 0.8, ruling out significant collinearity.

Note 3: The comparison between the CIS and CEO linear regression models is based on the premise that, while the datasets originate from different sources, both samples are comparable. The CIS sample (N = 11,401) was collected in person using proportional allocation sampling at the provincial level in Catalonia between 2012 and 2021, while the CEO sample (N = 16,159) was also collected in person, following the same proportional allocation sampling method at the provincial level in Catalonia between 2014 and 2017. Despite differences in sample size—both of which remain substantial—the time frame, geographical scope and distributions of age, vote recall, gender, educational attainment and province are similar across both datasets, allowing for a meaningful comparison of the models.

Source: own research based on data from the CIS and CEO.

In both models, the *Subjective national identity* variables are significant, and their directionality aligns with expectations. In the CIS model, individuals identifying as "Spanish only", "more Spanish than Catalan" and "as Catalan as Spanish" score 5.635, 5.256 and 3.758 points higher, respectively, than those identifying as "Catalan only". Similarly, in the CEO model, individuals in the same identity categories score 4.823, 4.348 and 3.011 points higher, respectively, than those identifying as "Catalan only". However, while the CIS *unipolar* scale accentuates the difference between the most extreme national identities, the CEO *bipolar* scale leads to less pronounced polarisation between these positions.

An analysis of the other variables with significant effects reveals that voting for the non-nationalist right or the PSC, as well as not voting for the Convergence and Union/Post-Convergence and Union (CiU/post-CiU) bloc or ERC, leads to higher scores towards minimal nationalism and Spanish nationalism compared to voting for "Other" parties. While gender does not appear to have a significant influence, age plays a minor role in the CEO model, where younger individuals tend to position themselves more towards Spanish nationalism, though the effect is minimal. Education and geographic location also affect positioning on the scales. In the CIS model, having no formal education and being from Barcelona shifts positioning towards minimal nationalism. By contrast, in the CEO model, having no formal education, completing only primary education, lacking higher education and not being from Girona increases the likelihood of positioning towards Spanish nationalism, relative to those with secondary education and those from Tarragona.

Secondly, Table 3 presents the linear regression models for the Basque Country scales (CIS and Euskobarómetro). In the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale model, the R^2 coefficient is 0.451, while in the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale model, it is 0.582. This indicates that the CIS and Euskobarómetro models explain 45.1% and 58.2% of the variability in the dependent variable, respectively. Both models therefore exhibit good levels of fit.

Table 3

Linear regression models for the CIS Minimum⸰Maximum Nationalism Scale and the Euskobarómetro Nationalism⸰Spanish Nationalism Scale

	CIS		Euskobarómetro	
	Beta	Standard error	Beta	Standard error
Subjective national identity				
Spanish only	4.068***	0.057	3.727***	0.03
More Spanish than Basque	3.562***	0.061	3.196***	0.03
As Basque as Spanish	2.482***	0.028	2.114***	0.016
More Basque than Spanish	0.716***	0.030	0.956***	0.017
(Ref.: Basque only)				
Vote recall				
Non-nationalist right	1.1997***	0.055	1.220***	0.027
PSE-EE	0.76***	0.039	0.491***	0.02
PNV	-1.37***	0.028	-0.532***	0.015
IA	-1.798***	0.039	-1.048***	0.022
(Ref.: Other)				
Gender (Ref.: Female)	0.0317	0.022	0.050***	0.012
Age	-0.001	0.001	0.002***	0.000
Educational attainment				
No formal education	0.158**	0.061	0.0597	0.032
Primary education	-0.0413	0.033	.001	0.019
VT	-0.124***	0.032	-0.036*	0.017
Higher education	-0.103**	0.032	-0.034	0.017
(Ref.: Secondary education)				
Province				
Álava	0.21***	0.028	0.051***	0.015
Biscay	0.155***	0.026	0.031*	0.014
(Ref.: Gipuzkoa)				
(Constant)	4.416***	0.054	2.796***	0.024
R^2	0.451		0.582	
N	36,026		49,009	

Note 1: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note 2: Three diagnostic tools were applied to detect potential collinearity issues between Subjective national identity and identity scales. The Variance Inflation Factor was 1 in all cases, Tolerance was consistently 1 and correlations were always below 0.8, ruling out significant collinearity.

Note 3: The comparison between the CIS and Euskobarómetro linear regression models is based on the premise that, although the datasets originate from different sources, the samples remain comparable. The CIS sample (N = 36,026) was collected in person using proportional allocation sampling at the provincial level in the Basque Autonomous Community (CAV) between 1994 and 2020, while the Euskobarómetro sample (N = 49,009) was also collected in person, following the same proportional allocation sampling method at the provincial level in the same territory between 1995 and 2019. Despite differences in sample size—N in both cases remains substantial—the time frame, geographical scope and distributions of age, vote recall, gender, educational attainment and province are similar across both datasets, allowing for a meaningful comparison of the models.

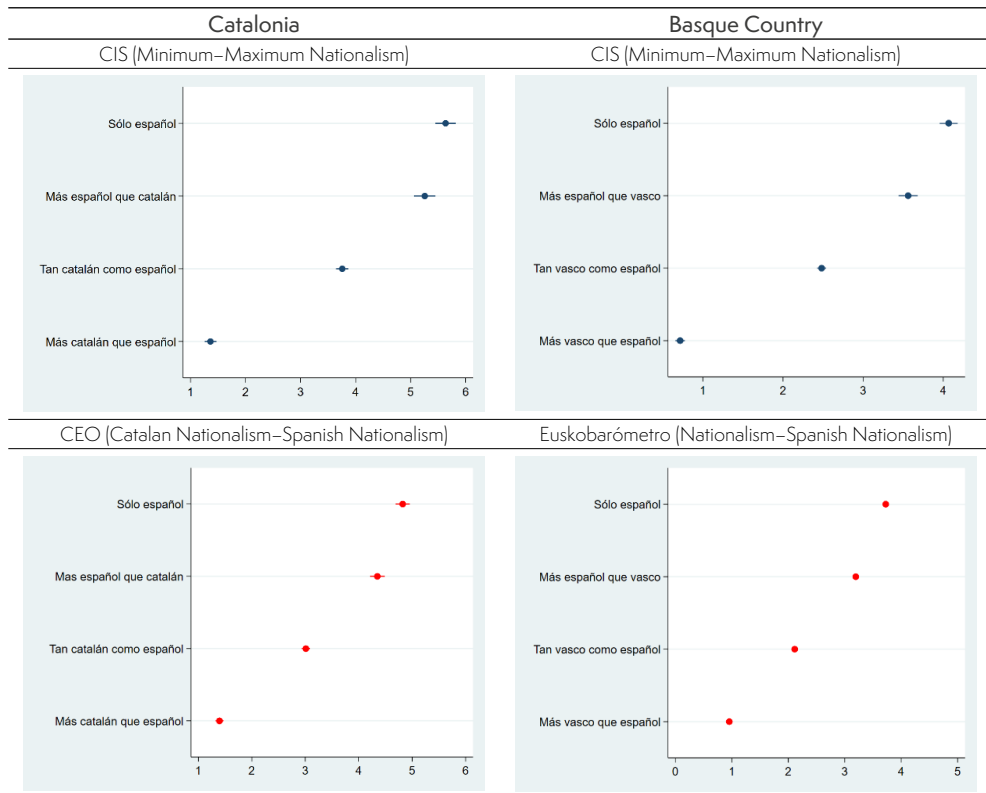Source: own research based on data from the CIS and Euskobarómetro.

In both models, the *Subjective national identity* variables remain significant, and their directionality aligns with expectations. In the CIS model, individuals identifying as "Spanish only", "more Spanish than Basque" and "as Basque as Spanish" score 4.068, 3.562 and 2.482 points higher, respectively, than those identifying as "Basque only". Similarly, in the Euskobarómetro model, individuals in the same identity categories score 3.727, 3.196 and 2.114 points higher, respectively, than those who identify as "Basque only". As in the Catalan case, the CIS *unipolar* scale accentuates the difference between the most extreme national identities, whereas the Euskobarómetro *bipolar* scale leads to less pronounced polarisation between these positions.

An analysis of the other variables with significant effects reveals that voting for the non-nationalist right or the PSE-EE, as well as not voting for the PNV or the IA, leads to higher scores towards minimal nationalism and Spanish nationalism, compared to voting for other options. While gender and age do not appear to have a significant influence, in the Euskobarómetro model, being male and older is associated with a slight shift towards Spanish nationalism, though the effect remains marginal. Educational attainment and geographic origin also influence positioning on the scales. In the CIS model, not having vocational training or higher education and being from Álava or Biscay increases alignment with minimal nationalism. In the Euskobarómetro model, not having vocational training and being from Álava or Biscay leads to greater alignment with Spanish nationalism, compared to those with secondary education and those from Gipuzkoa, respectively.

Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the effect of subjective national identity on the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale and the Nationalism/Catalan Nationalism−Spanish Nationalism Scale, based on the previous models. In Catalonia, the CIS scale tends to strongly polarise Spanish-identifying and dual identities. Individuals who identify as "Spanish only" or "more Spanish than Catalan" are positioned at the extremes, close to minimal nationalism, highlighting a clear separation from those who identify as "Catalan only". Dual identities ("as Catalan as Spanish") also tend to be positioned closer to the extremes, indicating a limited capacity to capture the nuances of these identities, which may reflect a more non-extreme sense of national belonging.

Figure 4

Effect of subjective national identity on the Minimum-Maximum Nationalism and Nationalism/Catalan Nationalism-Spanish Nationalism Scales

Source: own research based on data from the CIS, CEO and Euskobarómetro.

Unlike the CIS scale, the CEO scale offers a less polarised representation of Spanish-identifying and dual identities. While "Spanish only" and "more Spanish than Catalan" remain clearly differentiated, they are not as starkly polarised, allowing for a better understanding of national identity gradations. Dual identities ("as Catalan as Spanish") are also represented in a less polarised manner on this scale, reflecting a more balanced coexistence of Catalan and Spanish identities.

In the Basque Country, a similar pattern emerges. The CIS scale tends to strongly polarise Spanish-identifying individuals, placing those who identify as "Spanish only" or "more Spanish than Basque" at the extremes of the Minimum−Maximum Nationalism Scale. Dual identities ("as Basque as Spanish") are also pushed towards the extremes, highlighting the scale's limited sensitivity in capturing identities that are neither exclusively Basque nor exclusively Spanish.

By contrast, the Euskobarómetro scale demonstrates a greater capacity to capture the nuances within Spanish-identifying and dual identities. The "Spanish only" and "more Spanish than Basque" categories appear less polarised, allowing for an interpretation that more accurately reflects the complex reality of identity in the Basque Country. Similarly, dual identities ("as Basque as Spanish") are positioned in a less polarised manner, indicating a more balanced coexistence of Basque and Spanish identities.

6. Conclusions

This article has assessed the validity of measurement methods used to evaluate identity-based polarisation in regions marked by tensions along the centre-periphery axis. The methodological approach was based on a comparative analysis of Spain's main public opinion surveys—CIS, CEO, ICPS and Euskobarómetro—which was followed by bivariate and multivariate analyses comparing the *pluralist* or *bipolar* and *peripheral* or *unipolar* methods for measuring identity-based polarisation.

The bivariate analysis revealed significant differences in how *Subjective national identity* and *Vote recall* subgroups position themselves on the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale and the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale. The findings indicate that individuals with dual or Spanish-identifying identities, as well as those who vote for non-nationalist parties, tend to adopt more extreme positions on the CIS Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale compared to the *bipolar* scales of the CEO and Euskobarómetro. Furthermore, in the Basque case, this same discrepancy is also evident in relation to *Nationalist sentiment.*

Thus, the main finding derived from the multivariate analysis is that, in both Catalonia and the Basque Country, the Catalan Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale (CEO) and the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale (Euskobarómetro) exhibit greater sensitivity in capturing moderate positions within Spanish-identifying and dual identities, compared to the CIS Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale. As a result, these scales provide a more precise representation of the complexity of Catalan and Basque identity. While the *unipolar* design of the CIS effectively highlights the polarisation of national identity segments in terms of their acceptance or rejection of peripheral nationalism, *bipolar* designs, such as those employed by the CEO and Euskobarómetro, indicate that non-nationalists tend to be less polarised, as although they oppose peripheral nationalism, they do not necessarily adopt an equally extreme counter-position. This contrasts with the CIS scale, where its unidimensional approach may reduce the visibility of more moderate positions within these identities and fail to fully reflect the complex identity landscape of Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The asymmetry in positioning between the *bipolar* and *unipolar* scales may stem from complementary supply and demand factors. On one hand, peripheral nationalism aims to promote a distinct and exclusive identity, advocating for greater au-

tonomy or independence at the institutional level (Canal, 2018; De Pablo and Mees, 2005; Llera, 1999). Consequently, it naturally fosters greater polarisation, aligning with the "imperative of homogeneity" (Dekker *et al.*, 2003), among nationalists. This stands in contrast to the less conflictual and constitutionally integrated identity of dual-identifying and Spanish-identifying individuals, which is inherently more pluralistic. On the other hand, nationalist mobilisation is often driven by the perception—whether real or imagined—of a threat to one's own identity (Canal, 2018; Juaristi, 1997; Schatz, Staub and Lavine, 1999). This contrasts with non-nationalists, whose identity has been marginalised in the Basque Country due to the impact of terrorism (Llera and Leonisio, 2017; Llera, García and León-Ranero, 2022) and weakened by the historical fragility of Spanish national identity (Álvarez, 2005; De Riquer, 2001). As a result, non-nationalists have struggled to develop a proactive, rather than reactive, political project to promote their identity in opposition to nationalism (Canal, 2018; León-Ranero, 2024).

This finding has important implications, as the choice of measurement tool can significantly influence how identity-based polarisation is understood. If inappropriate measurement tools are used in complex identity contexts, there is a risk of underestimating or misinterpreting the identity dynamics of regions experiencing centre-periphery tensions. Thus, while further validation is needed using individual-level survey data that integrate both scale designs, the findings of this approximate study suggest that *bipolar* scales, such as those employed by the CEO and Euskobarómetro, may be better suited for analysing identity-based polarisation in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia.

7. Bibliography

Agnew, J. (2000). From the political economy of regions to a regional political economy. *Progress in Human Geography*, 24, 101-110. https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200676580659.

Álvarez, J. (2005). *Mater dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX.* Madrid: Taurus.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* London: Verso.

Ares, C. and Rama, J. (2019). Las elecciones al Parlamento de Galicia (1981-2016). La importancia de la estrategia de transversalidad del PP de G. In B. Gómez, S. Alonso and L. Cabeza (Eds.), *En busca del poder territorial: cuatro décadas de elecciones autonómicas en España* (pp. 303-330). Madrid: CIS.

Barrio, A., Barberá, Ó. and Rodríguez, J. (2018). 'Spain steals from us!' The 'populist drift' of Catalan regionalism. *Comparative European Politics*, 16, 993-1011. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-018-0140-3.

Burg, S. L. (2015). Identity, Grievances, and Popular Mobilization for Independence

in Catalonia. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 21, 289–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2015.1063912.

Canal, J. (2018). Entre el autonomismo y la independencia: nacionalismo, nación y procesos de nacionalización en Cataluña (1980–2015). In I. Sepúlveda (Ed.), *Nación y nacionalismos en la España de las autonomías* (pp. 77-108). Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.

Casal, F. (2019). Causas y consecuencias de la polarización: ¿Qué es lo que sabemos? *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político*, 64, 5-15.

Centro de Estudios de Opinión (2024). Barómetro de Opinión Política. Recovered from https://ceo.gencat.cat/ca/barometre/ (last view: August 21, 2024).

Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (2024). Catálogo de estudios. Recovered from https://www.cis.es/estudios/catalogo-estudios (last view: August 21, 2024).

De Pablo, S. and Mees, L. (2005). *El péndulo patriótico. Historia del Partido Nacionalista Vasco: (1895-2005).* Barcelona: Crítica.

De Riquer, B. (2001). *Escolta, Espanya. La cuestión catalana en la época liberal.* Madrid: Marcial Pons

Dekker, H., Malová, D. and Hoogendoorn, S. (2003). Nationalism and Its Explanations. *Political Psychology*, 24(2), 345-376. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00331.

Díez, J. (1999). *Naciones divididas. Clase, política y nacionalismo en el País Vasco y Cataluña.* Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Euskobarómetro (2024). «Oleadas del Euskobarómetro».

Euskobarómetro (2024). Oleadas del Euskobarómetro. Recovered from https://www.ehu.eus/es/web/euskobarometro/aurkezpenak (last view: August 21, 2024).

Gidron, N., Adams, J. and Horne, W. (2020). *American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective.* Cambridge University Press.

Gómez-Reino, M. and Marcos-Marne, H. (2022). Between center-periphery and left-right: A comparison of traditional and new regionalist parties' strategies in Galicia during the Great Recession. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 196, 131-158.

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1991). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Instituto de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales (2024). Sondeig d'Opinió Catalunya. Integrated Age Base 1991-2023. Recovered from https://www.icps.cat/ (last view: August 21, 2024).

Jaráiz, E., Lagares, N. and Barreiro, X. L. (2017). Condiciones y razones del «procés». *Araucaria: Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política, Humanidades y Relaciones Internacionales*, 19(38), 141-170.

Juaristi, J. (1997). *El bucle melancólico.* Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

Keating, M. (2004). *Regions and regionalism in Europe.* Northhampton, MA: Edward

Elgar.

Kasianenko, N. (2020). Measuring Nationalist Sentiments in East-Central Europe: A Cross-National Study. *Ethnopolitics, 21*(4), 352-380. https://doi.org/10.1080/174 49057.2020.1819595.

Lagares, N., Máiz, R. and Rivera, J. M. (2022). El régimen emocional del «procés» tras las elecciones catalanas de 2021. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 58, 19-52.

Lamo de Espinosa, E. (2007). El cambio social en España. La España de las autonomías y el papel de España en Cataluña y el País Vasco. In J. P. Fusi and G. Gómez-Ferrer (Coords.), *La España de las autonomías, vol. II* (pp. 467-495). Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

León-Ranero, J. M. (2024). *La construcción del discurso político de la Derecha No Nacionalista del País Vasco (1980-2020).* Doctoral thesis presented at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

Leonisio, R. (2016). *Discurso político de los socialistas vascos. Un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo (1977-2011).* Doctoral thesis presented at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

Leonisio, R. and Strijbis, O. (2011). Izquierda-derecha vs. centro-periferia una aproximación al discurso de los partidos políticos vascos (1977-2009). *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 26, 63-86.

Liebert, U. (1990). From polarization to pluralism: regional-nationalist parties in the process of democratic consolidation in post-Franco Spain. In Geoffrey Pridham (Ed.), *Securing Democracy. Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe* (pp. 147-178). London: Routledge.

Linz, J. J. (1973). Early State-Building and Late Peripheral Nationalisms against the State: The Case of Spain, vol. II. In S. N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Building States and Nations* (pp. 32-116). Beverly Hills: SAGE.

Linz, J. J. (1985a). De la crisis de un Estado unitario al Estado de las Autonomías. In F. Fernández (Ed.), *La España de las Autonomías* (pp. 527-672). Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local.

Linz, J. J. (1985b). From Primordialism to Nationalism. In E. A. Tiryakian and R. Rogowski (Eds.), *New Nationalism of the Developed West. Toward Explanation* (pp. 203-253). Boston: Allen & Unwin.

Linz, J. J. (1993). Los nacionalismos en España: Una perspectiva comparada. In J. Casassas and E. D'Auria (Coords.), *El Estado Moderno en Italia y España: ponencias del Simposio Internacional «Organización del Estado moderno y contemporáneo en Italia y España»* (pp. 79-88). Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona.

Linz, J. J. (1999). Democracia, multinacionalismo y federalismo. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 1(1), 7-40.

Linz, J. J. *et al.* (1981). *Informe sociológico sobre el cambio político en España.* Madrid: Euramérica.

Linz, J. J. *et al.* (1986). *Conflicto en Euskadi.* Madrid: Espasa Calpe.

Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (1967). *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction.* New York: The Free Press.

Llera, F. J. (1999). El vértigo del nacionalismo vasco: Entre Ermua y Estella. *Claves de Razón Práctica*, 89, 16–22.

Llera, F. J. (2002). La polarización vasca: entre la autonomía y la independencia. En W. Safran y R. Máiz (Coords.), *Identidad y autogobierno en sociedades multiculturales* (pp. 165–186). Madrid: Ariel.

Llera, F. J. (2003). La red terrorista: subcultura de la violencia y nacionalismo en Euskadi. In A. Robles (Ed.), *La sangre de las naciones. Identidades nacionales y violencia política* (pp. 265–296). Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Llera, F. J. (2005). Euskadi 2005: final de trayecto. *Claves de la Razón Práctica*, 153, 18–25.

Llera, F. J. (2016). Elecciones en un nuevo ciclo político. In F. J. Llera (Ed.), *Las elecciones autonómicas en el País Vasco, 1980–2012* (pp. 27–63). Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Llera, F. J. (2020). Cataluña y Euskadi: ¿convergencia o divergencia? In F. Miguélez (Coord.), *Societat catalana 2016–2017* (pp. 179–268). Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

Llera, F. J. and Leonisio, R. (2017). *La estrategia del miedo. ETA y la espiral del silencio en el País Vasco.* Informe del Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo, 1.

Llera, F. J., García, J. and León-Ranero, J. M. (2022). Midiendo la espiral del silencio en contextos de violencia política: el caso vasco. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 58, 111–140.

Llera, F. J., Leonisio, R., García, J. and Pérez, S. (2014). Las elecciones autonómicas vascas de 2012. Alternancia en un nuevo ciclo político. *Sistema*, 236, 3–25.

Máiz, R. (1996). Nación de Breogán: oportunidades políticas y estrategias enmarcadoras en el movimiento nacionalista gallego (1886–1996). *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 92, 33–75.

Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McCoy, J., Rahman, T. and Somer, M. (2018). Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *62*(1), 16–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759576.

Milián, J. (2021). *El proceso español. La catalanización de la política española y el desmantelamiento de la España de la Transición.* Barcelona: Deusto.

Moreno, L. and Giner, S. (1990). Centro y periferia. La dimensión étnica de la sociedad española. En S. Giner (Coord.), *España, sociedad y política* (pp. 169–197). Madrid: Espasa.

Ocaña, F. A. and Oñate, P. (1999). Índices e indicadores del sistema electoral y del sistema de partidos una propuesta informática para su cálculo. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 86, 223-245. https://doi.org/10.5477/cis/reis.86.223.

Pallarés, F., Montero, J. R. and Llera, F. J. (1998). Los Partidos de Ámbito No Estatal en España: notas actitudinales sobre nacionalismos y regionalismos. In R. Agranoff and R. Bañón i Martínez (Coords.), *El estado de las autonomías: ¿hacia un nuevo federalismo?* (pp. 205-244). Bilbao: Instituto Vasco de Administración Pública (IVAP).

Quiroga, A. and Molina, F. (2020). National Deadlock. Hot Nationalism, Dual Identities and Catalan Independence (2008-2019). *Genealogy*, 4(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4010015.

Rivera, A. (2018). «No un estado, pero más que una simple región». El autogobierno vasco, 1979-2016. In I. Sepúlveda (Ed.), *Nación y nacionalismos en la España de las autonomías* (pp. 109-140). Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.

Rodríguez, I., Santamaría, D. and Miller, L. (2022). Electoral Competition and Partisan Affective Polarisation in Spain. *South European Society and Politics*, 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2022.2038492.

Rovny, J. (2015). Riker and Rokkan: Remarks on the strategy and structure of party competition. *Party Politics*, 21(6), 912-918. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815602588.

Schatz, R., Staub, E. and Lavine, H. (1999). On the varieties of national attachment: Blind versus constructive patriotism. *Political Psychology*, 20(1), 151-172. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00140.

Stepan, A., Linz, J. J. and Yogendra, Y. (2011). *La creación de naciones-estado. India y otras democracias multinacionales.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P. and Flament, C. (1971). Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1 (2), 149-178. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202.

Torcal, M. and Comellas, J. M. (2022). Affective Polarisation in Times of Political Instability and Conflict. Spain from a Comparative Perspective. *South European Society and Politics*, 0(0), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2022.2044236.

Vallès, J. M. (1991). Entre la regularidad y la indeterminación. Balance sobre el comportamiento electoral en España (1977-1989). In J. Vidal (Ed.), *España a debate, I. La política* (pp. 27-44). Madrid: Tecnos

Notes

1   This study adopts this term for the Minimum–Maximum Nationalism Scale.

2   This designation was previously used by Professor Francisco J. Llera (Llera, Leonisio, García and Pérez, 2014) for the Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale.

3   This Institute applied the 0–10 scale in 2008 and, from 2015 onwards, adopted the format mentioned. The 2015 data point has been excluded from the graph as it does not contain independent measurements for the ERC, since it was integrated into Junts pel Sí.

4   Additionally, the Basque Government's Sociological Prospection Office has conducted Basque Sociometers since 1996. They also include the variable as applied by the CIS. However, these have been excluded from the analysis due to the unavailability of microdata. This lack of transparency in a public socio-political research institution is noteworthy.

5   With the exception of 1997, 1998, 2017 and 2019, when only one survey wave was conducted annually.

6   The following studies have been integrated: 1978, 1987, 1998, 2033, 2137, 2192, 2199, 2373, 2374, 2410, 2543, 2660, 2852, 2857, 2965, 2970, 3113, 3202 and 3314. For bivariate and multivariate analyses, and to enhance comparability with CEO data, only studies 2965, 2970, 3113, 3202 and 3314 were selected.

7   The following studies have been integrated: 2096, 2116, 2120, 2282, 2296, 2304, 2308, 2407, 2414, 2421, 2593, 2598, 2601, 2784, 2795, 2959, 2964, 3154, 3275 and 3293.

8   The following studies have been integrated: 2036, 2052, 2067, 2070, 2239, 2263, 2295, 2434, 2603, 2608, 2611, 2783, 2796, 2958, 2963, 3155 and 3276.

9   The following studies have been integrated: 746, 774, 795, 804, 816, 826, 835, 850, 857 and 863.

10   The following studies have been integrated: 1995-05, 1995-11, 1997, 1998, 1999-05, 1999-11, 2000-05, 2000-11, 2001-05, 2001-11, 2002-05, 2002-11, 2003-05, 2003-11, 2004-05, 2004-11, 2005-05, 2005-11, 2006-05, 2006-11, 2007-05, 2007-11, 2008-05, 2008-11, 2009-05, 2009-11, 2010-05, 2010-11, 2011-05, 2011-11, 2012-05, 2012-11, 2013-05, 2013-11, 2014-05, 2015, 2016-05, 2016-11, 2017, 2018-05, 2018-11 and 2019.

11   The integrated studies are: 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

12   Issues stemming from this change related to the interpretation, distribution and variations at extreme points should be noted. All results should be interpreted with these implications in mind.

13   The Galician case has been excluded due to the availability of only a unipolar measurement of identity-based polarisation.

14   The "CiU" category includes all successor political brands, such as Junts per Catalunya. Junts pel Sí, the coalition formed for the 2015 Catalan elections, has been excluded as it combined the post-Convergence space with ERC.

15   Sartori's polarisation index (Ocaña and Oñate, 1999) has been applied, though its calculation has been limited to relevant parties within the system. In Catalonia, this includes the aggregated non-nationalist right and ERC; in the Basque Country, it includes the non-nationalist right and IA; and in Galicia, it includes the non-nationalist right and the BNG.

16   In the model based on the CIS Catalonia dataset and given that CEO data was only available from 2017 onwards, data prior to this date have been excluded to ensure a consistent temporal framework.

17   It is important to note that the bipolar scales used in Catalonia (Catalan Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale) and the Basque Country (Nationalism–Spanish Nationalism Scale) differ in how they label the peripheral identity. However, it is assumed that respondents interpret the scales in a comparable manner, as confirmed by the results.

José Manuel León-Ranero

José Manuel León-Ranero holds a PhD in political science from the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and master's degrees in government, leadership and public management from the Atlantic Institute of Government (IADG) and in democracy and government from the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). He received the Extraordinary End-of-Degree Award and was a candidate for the Extraordinary Doctorate Award. He currently works as a professor, researcher and consultant for various institutions and organisations. His publications include "Coalicionabilidad en un contexto de pluralismo polarizado: el caso vasco", "Los sistemas autonómicos de partidos. ¿Convergencia y/o divergencia?" and "Un liderazgo anti-populista en un escenario político singular: el resurgimiento del centro-derecha griego".

Culture Wars, GAL/TAN Positioning and Affective Polarisation in Spain

Batallas culturales, posicionamientos GAL/TAN y polarización afectiva en España

Alberto Mora Rodríguez
University of Murcia, *Spain*
alberto.mora@um.es

José Miguel Rojo Martínez
University of Murcia, *Spain*
josemiguel.rojo@um.es

Alejandro Soler Contreras
University of Murcia, Spain
alejandro.solerc@um.es

ABSTRACT

This article examines the GAL/TAN dimension *(Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist)* and its implications for sociocultural polarisation and emerging political agendas. Using a strictly quantitative approach based on survey data from Spanish voters, the study analyses positions on key issues such as feminism, environmentalism, immigration and gender-based violence. The objective is to identify the variables shaping these positions and assess their impact on levels of affective polarisation. The findings indicate that issues linked to the GAL/TAN axis exacerbate socio-cultural divisions and heighten hostility between partisan groups. Moreover, the role of age and gender in GAL/TAN positioning underscores how culture wars primarily manifest as generational and gender-based conflicts. This study contributes to the broader debate on the GAL/TAN dimension, offering empirical evidence from the Spanish context and highlighting how the growing salience of these issues intensifies political and social divisions.

HOW TO REFERENCE: Mora Rodríguez, A., Rojo Martínez, J. M. and Soler Contreras, A. (2025). Batallas culturales, posicionamientos GAL/TAN y polarización afectiva en España. *Revista Centra de Ciencias Sociales, 4*(1), 199-224. https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.119

Original version can be read at https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.119

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la dimensión GAL/TAN *(Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs. Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist)* y sus implicaciones para la polarización sociocultural y las nuevas agendas políticas. Con un enfoque estrictamente cuantitativo, basado en datos de encuestas realizadas a electores españoles, se examinan los posicionamientos en temas como feminismo, ecologismo, inmigración y violencia de género. El objetivo es identificar las variables que influyen en estos posicionamientos y su impacto en los niveles de polarización afectiva. Los resultados indican que los temas vinculados al eje GAL/TAN potencian las divisiones socioculturales y favorecen un aumento de la hostilidad entre grupos partidistas. Por otro lado, la influencia de la edad y del sexo en los posicionamientos GAL/TAN muestra cómo las batallas culturales se configuran esencialmente como conflictos generacionales y de género. Este trabajo contribuye al debate general sobre la dimensión GAL/TAN, aportando evidencia empírica para el caso español y destacando cómo estos asuntos, al ganar protagonismo, intensifican la división política y social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: polarización afectiva; GAL/TAN; ideología; posmaterialismo; batallas culturales; polarización temática.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the processes of differentiation and contrast between political parties in major Western democracies have increasingly incorporated post-materialist elements[1], giving rise to cultural and identity-based conflicts in response to a new order of values (Inglehart and Abramson, 1999; Guth and Nelsen, 2021; Blumberg, 2024). In contexts of prosperity and high levels of development, the likelihood of major programmatic conflicts in the economic sphere diminishes, as these issues become less pressing—or no longer an urgent necessity—for a working class that is increasingly fragmented in terms of status and interests. Likewise, the widespread coverage of basic needs brings new non-material concerns to the public agenda—particularly during periods of economic prosperity—while economic debates increasingly revolve around complex and technical issues inherent to financial capitalism, which acquire an ideologically ambiguous significance. It is often difficult to establish identity-symbolic distinctions around certain economic decisions or positions, whereas it is far easier to delineate left and right in cultural matters. Economic policy has reached a high level of sophistication, whereas cultural issues are more readily processed and allow for simpler responses, in which various cognitive shortcuts of group or moral origin can operate with greater clarity (Johnston and Wronski, 2015).

In this context, alongside the traditional labour and conservative parties—reflecting the capital/labour conflict—new political formations have emerged, with varying degrees of success. These include green and new left parties, inspired by the post-Marxist positions of the Frankfurt School, as well as authoritarian movements ranging from post-fascism to the radical right, which react against the progress of feminism, multiculturalism and the rights of the LGBTQI+ community (Kitschelt, 1988; Weeks and Allen, 2023). As a result, party competition in post-industrial so-

cieties has moved away from the unidimensionality associated with economic-distributive logic, making it necessary to consider positions on emerging post-materialist cultural values as a decisive factor in ideological classification (Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2019). This shift has given rise to a new transnational cleavage centred on two culturally based positions: the TAN pole—traditionalist, authoritarian and nationalist—and the GAL pole—green, alternative and libertarian (Bayerlein, 2021; Crulli, 2023). Some scholars argue that in more developed economies, GAL/TAN values, within the post-materialist (GAL) and materialist (TAN) framework, already play a crucial role in explaining political behaviour (Henn, Oldfield and Hart, 2018; Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

However, it is not only that cultural issues are increasingly shaping the political agenda or that they are highly relevant for understanding the contemporary operational meaning of the terms left and right (Smith and Boas, 2024; Kriesi *et al.*, 2006). They are also exerting a significant influence on the climate of affective polarisation. Recent research on the causes of growing affective polarisation in democratic societies repeatedly raises the question of the extent to which certain issues or policies contribute most decisively to increasing interparty hostility (Han, 2023). This concern has been addressed with broad consensus, highlighting how culturally based issues, which carry significant moral and identity-related connotations, tend to provoke greater affective tensions (Harteveld, 2021; Gidron, Adams and Horne, 2023). Unlike economic issues, cultural topics tap into the deeply held convictions of specific groups, imbued with strong symbolic significance (Ryan, 2023). By challenging deeply rooted values or lifestyles, these issues strike at the core of personal identity and foster greater emotional engagement among citizens in the political struggle, which is framed as a moralised defence of in-group beliefs (D'Amore, Van Zomeren and Koudenburg, 2022). When addressing economic problems, voters tend to adopt a more pragmatic and rational approach, seeking their own benefit. In contrast, cultural conflicts generate more irreconcilable differences, stemming from incompatible world views, which affect both the in-group's position and individual self-esteem (Han, 2023).

Although the debate on the impact of culture wars on political competition in post-industrial economies remains intense, relatively little evidence exists on this phenomenon in Spain. The country's persistent economic challenges—including severe recessions with significant consequences for the labour market—may have tempered the prominence of post-materialist debates. Notwithstanding this, in this article, we analyse Spanish voters' positions on various issues—feminism, environmentalism, immigration and gender-based violence—linked to the GAL/TAN axis, exploring the variables that influence these positions and how they may shape levels of affective polarisation. Taken together, we provide an overview of some of the key culture wars shaping Spain's political agenda and their contribution to the climate of confrontation between different partisan groups.

2. Theoretical perspectives

2.1. On the GAL/TAN dimension and its implications: socio-cultural polarisation and emerging agendas

The ideological dimension of GAL/TAN was first introduced in the early 21st century by scholars such as Hooghe *et al.* (2002) to explain public opinion on European integration. These authors observed that scores on the GAL/TAN scale were more relevant in predicting variations in opinions on European integration than left-right positioning, thereby paving the way for new analytical models. It subsequently became evident that the GAL/TAN ideological divide was deeply linked to the process of globalisation, as it not only set libertarians against traditionalists but also cosmopolitans against communitarians (Bornschier, 2010; Wagner *et al.*, 2018). As a result, a new dimension of political competition emerged, associated with issues such as environmentalism, cultural diversity, immigration and lifestyle choices.

This conflict between post-materialists and materialists was clearly reflected in the opposition between progressive projects and the nationalist traditionalism of the radical right at the TAN pole, which frequently also embraced populist positions (Charron, Lapuente and Rodríguez-Pose, 2022). Consequently, the ideological scale constructed around the GAL/TAN poles was designed to represent a socio-cultural conflict that does not necessarily align with individuals' economic values. For this reason, the preferred indicators for measuring this dimension include attitudes towards immigration, sexual minorities, environmental protection and religious values (Kekkonen, Kawecki and Himmelroos, 2024). The positioning on these issues reflects a new cleavage driven by socio-demographic changes that have reshaped the composition of political communities. Among the most notable factors are the intensification of migration flows and the resulting increase in ethnic diversity, rising levels of education and the widening of generational contrasts, as people of increasingly different ages coexist within the same space (Ford and Jennings, 2020). Particular emphasis has been placed on the impact of educational attainment on socio-cultural divisions, as evidence suggests that voters with more post-materialist or pro-GAL views generally have higher levels of education than pro-TAN voters (Hooghe, Marks and Kamphorst, 2024). Other studies indicate that LGBTQI+ individuals, young people and women are more inclined towards cosmopolitan values and GAL-aligned positions (Montero and Torcal, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 2022).

Building on this debate, scholars have proposed the concepts of the cultural left (represented by the GAL pole) and the cultural right (represented by the TAN pole), thereby moving beyond the traditional left-right framework, which is more commonly associated with economic issues (Rovny *et al.*, 2022). This perspective introduces a new two-dimensional reality, in which individuals may strongly support state regulation of the economy or the provision of basic goods by the state while simultaneously rejecting multiculturalism, the erosion of national sovereignty or feminist demands, among other issues. Since these voters would be—using common

terminology—"socially conservative but economically left-wing", it becomes necessary to consider new ideological classification coordinates[2]. However, the limitations of this argument must also be acknowledged—namely, the evidence suggesting that individuals positioned on the cultural right are generally also aligned with the economic right, calling into question the validity of the bidimensionality hypothesis. As noted by García Sanz, Llamazares and Manrique García (2018, pp. 3–4), the correlation between party positions on the GAL/TAN dimension, the economic dimension and their overall left-right placement is 0.89 in Spain and even higher in other European countries such as France and Italy. This argument is further supported by Graphs 1 and 2, based on data from the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (CHES), which encompass both Spain and a significant number of European Union countries. In contrast, this pattern does not hold in Scandinavian democracies, where the correlation between left-right positioning and the GAL/TAN dimension is significantly lower, remaining below 0.30 (Polk *et al.*, 2017). This may help explain why academic interest in the impact of the GAL/TAN dimension has been particularly strong in these countries, which are also characterised by high levels of wealth and social welfare.

Graph 1

Positioning of political families on the GAL/TAN and left-right ideological scales (2019)
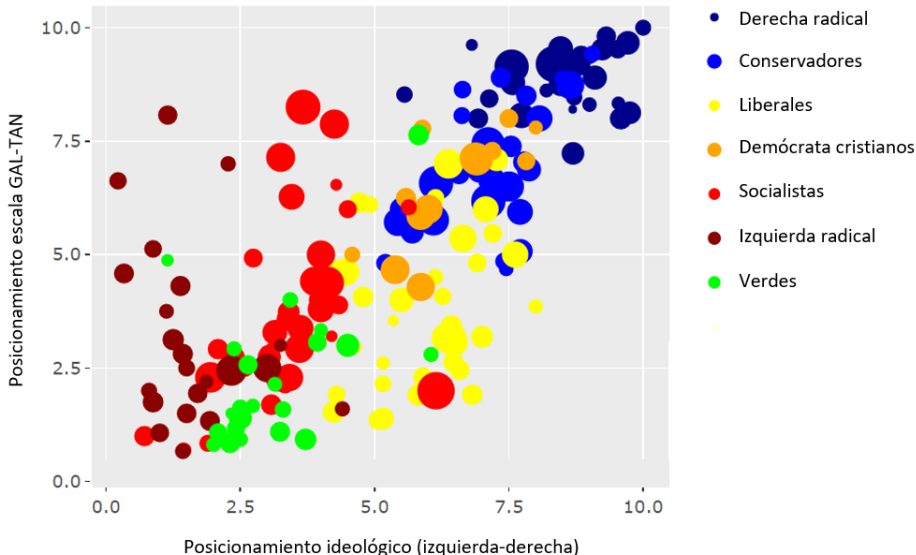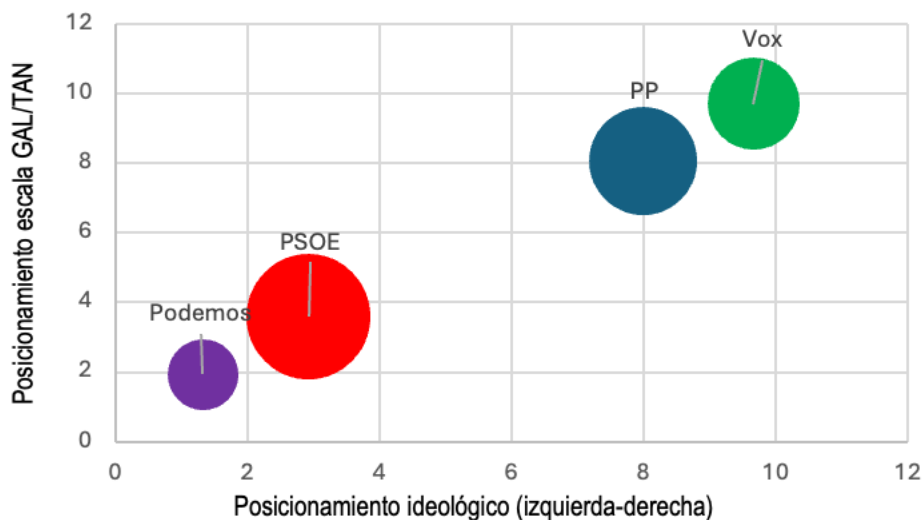

Note: The graph includes all political parties from EU member states in 2019, along with Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.
Source: CHES, 2019.

Graph 2

Positioning of the four main political parties in Spain on the GAL/TAN and left-right ideological scales (2019)

Source: own research based on CHES, 2019.

Beyond the debate on the bidimensionality of the ideological axis, there is broader consensus on the capacity of issues related to culture wars and post-materialist values—those situated within the GAL/TAN tension—to drive higher levels of polarisation. Even if we accept that positioning on these issues reflects the classic left-right conflict rather than a new competitive order, it remains evident that when such topics dominate the agenda, levels of tension and confrontation are higher than in economic debates. For instance, Kawecki (2022) demonstrates how affective polarisation increased in Finland as the GAL/TAN dimension gained greater prominence in the political agenda. Similarly, Kekkonen, Kawecki and Himmelroos (2024) find that extreme positions on the GAL/TAN axis have been as strong a predictor of affective polarisation as ideological extremism measured through the left-right dichotomy, but only in the past decade. Likewise, Björkstedt and Herne (2023) argue that voters who support parties positioned at the extremes of the GAL/TAN axis exhibit distinct personality traits and psychological profiles, further intensifying polarisation between them. More recently, Dassonneville *et al.* (2024) identified a stark divide between TAN parties and all other parties in Western Europe, as well as particularly pronounced polarisation between these parties and green formations.

The recognition of the GAL/TAN axis as a predictor of affective polarisation has gained increasing relevance in academic literature, particularly based on evidence from European democracies (Kekkonen and Ylä-Anttila, 2021; Vachudova, 2021). Reactionary cultural discourses seek to challenge the hegemony of progressive forces, which advocate for changes in various aspects of life, including diet, gender roles, family structures, secularisation and refugee reception. Both sides perceive their opponents as a threat in a debate that tends towards abstraction and the opposition of largely non-negotiable values. These debates ultimately give rise to a broader reflection on the desired model of society—that is, on who we are or who we aspire to be—as well as on the lifestyles and behaviours that should be regarded as socially acceptable. This ontological dilemma fosters affective hostility towards out-groups, which are becoming increasingly distanced from one another in terms of lifestyles, preferences and normative world views (Ollroge and Sawert, 2022). Politics thus becomes a reflection of broader trends in social segregation, further reinforcing the existence of opposing cognitive frameworks. Ultimately, politics is exerting an ever-greater influence on the personal sphere and on individuals' most deeply held beliefs, sidelining less emotionally charged or more technical policy matters (Rojo and Crespo, 2023).

2.2. Culture wars in contemporary Spain

In 1991, James Hunter published *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, which became the seminal study on cultural battles. This work, grounded in a Gramscian framework, meticulously examines how the moral opposition between orthodoxy and progressivism was emerging as the primary axis of socio-political division in the United States. This overarching conflict took shape in debates over issues such as abortion, the content of school curricula and conceptions of authority. When analysing the positions of Spaniards on various issues situated along the GAL/TAN axis or reflecting emerging post-materialist values, it is essential to first briefly consider the scope of culture wars in Spain. In the Spanish context, discussions of cultural conflict inevitably lead to key historical moments marked by a clash between radically different world views—modernity versus tradition—such as the Spanish Civil War (Bericat Alastuey, 2003). Throughout these periods, opposing positions on religion, civil rights and plurinationality have remained central—issues that continue to be relevant today alongside others that have emerged as a result of globalisation and new social movements (NSMs).

By the late 20th century, Montero and Torcal (1995) had already identified the cultural shift underway in Spain, marked by a significant decline in materialist profiles and the channelling of post-materialist values among younger cohorts through the Izquierda Unida coalition. This coalition gradually evolved from its roots in traditional, materialist communist leftism into a new discourse that was more pacifist, eco-socialist and eco-feminist—cosmopolitan in its defence of multiculturalism while also critical of European (economic) integration. Since the 1990s, cultural conflicts in Spain have been steadily reactivated, with the first term of Prime Minister Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–2008) being particularly intense in this regard. This pe-

riod saw the passage of the Historical Memory Law, the Organic Law for the Effective Equality of Women and Men and the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, as well as reforms in education policy and abortion regulation (Álvarez-Benavides and Jiménez Aguilar, 2021). Similarly, in 2005, Spain undertook a large-scale regularisation of immigrants, followed a year later by the reform of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. The backlash against this progressive agenda from the most conservative sectors of the Spanish right—including the Episcopal Conference and other ultra-Catholic groups such as HazteOír—laid the groundwork for the counter-revolutionary programme of Vox. The party emerged in response to what it perceived as cultural assimilation imposed on a mainstream right that, in its view, had been excessively lenient towards Rodríguez Zapatero's transformative project (Álvarez-Benavides and Jiménez Aguilar, 2021). Consequently, the departure of Vox's leaders from the Partido Popular stemmed from disagreements over the party's strategy on moral and cultural issues—a reaction against the rise of *anti-Spanish* movements and the perceived passivity of Mariano Rajoy—though no incompatibility with economic programmes was ever expressed (Garrido Rubia, Martínez Rodríguez and Mora Rodríguez, 2022). The emergence of Vox resembled a spiritual quest to reclaim the lost essence of the Spanish right.

Since 2018, Spain's political landscape has included Vox, a nationalist and traditionalist radical right party firmly positioned within the TAN pole (see Graph 2). However, a major green party as a direct cultural counterweight has yet to emerge. At its inception, Podemos sought to transcend "class-based material interests" to construct a popular and cross-cutting hegemonic subject (Franzé, 2017), though its discourse also reflected the economic discontent generated by the financial crisis. Over time, the left-wing grouping that emerged from the 15-M anti-austerity movement abandoned populism and returned to the left-right axis, shifting its focus to post-materialist issues such as feminism and minority rights. Simultaneously, Vox positioned itself as an alternative to *woke* culture—a term originally used by the *Black Lives Matter movement but later co-opted pejoratively by the radical right to criticise so-called "cultural Marxist" movements advocating for greater representation and protection of racial and sexual minorities (López Bunyasi and Watts Smith, 2019; Davies and MacRae, 2023)—and to political correctness, in response to the growing influence of GAL values in the struggle for social hegemony (Galais and Pérez-Rajó, 2023).*

Anti-feminism, criticism of so-called "gender ideology", nativism, opposition to separatism and the defence of Catholicism as the core of national identity have become central tenets of the conservative reaction against the cultural advance of the New Left in Spain. These elements are key in today's culture wars, expressed in dichotomies such as "communism vs freedom" (popularised by Isabel Díaz Ayuso during the 2021 Madrid regional elections) or through figures such as Argentine President Javier Milei. In both cases, there is a notable intertwining of ultra-liberal economic programmes with ultra-conservative cultural agendas, reinforcing initial scepticism regarding the bidimensionality of the ideological axis in Southern European countries.

3. Hypotheses and objectives

Having established the context and theoretical framework, the primary objective of this study is to analyse how Spaniards position themselves on key issues associated with the GAL/TAN dimension and to identify the variables that shape these positions. Additionally, this research aims to understand how these positions influence levels of affective polarisation towards political parties.

First, a general overview will be provided of how Spaniards position themselves on key issues linked to the GAL/TAN dimension, based on data from the survey used in this study. The topics examined include perspectives on feminist policies, environmentalism, immigration and gender-based violence. The goal is to describe these positions both in aggregate terms and across different respondent groups, considering socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, employment status and educational attainment, as well as political predispositions such as ideology and party affiliation or voting preferences. Second, the study will seek to identify which variables significantly influence respondents' positions on the GAL/TAN axis. Finally, an analysis will be conducted to determine which issues within the GAL/TAN framework have the greatest impact on individual affective polarisation.

In line with these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed for validation:

H1**:** Positions on issues associated with the GAL/TAN dimension vary significantly depending on an individual's self-placement on the left-right ideological scale and their party affiliation or voting preference.

H2: A significant divide exists in GAL/TAN positions based on gender and age groups. Women and younger individuals tend to adopt more progressive (GAL) stances, while men and older individuals are more likely to lean towards conservative (TAN) positions.

H3: Extreme positions on the GAL/TAN dimension have a significant impact on partisan-based affective polarisation. Among the issues analysed, polarised attitudes towards feminism and immigration are expected to contribute most to intensifying affective polarisation, whereas positions on environmentalism and gender-based violence—due to their greater potential for social consensus—are anticipated to have a lesser impact.

4. Methodology

The data source for this study is the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Special Research Group at the University of Murcia. A total of 1,236 telephone interviews[3] were conducted using the CATI system between 25 April and 18 May 2022, targeting a representative sample of the Spanish population aged 18 and over.

Given the nature of the data source, this study follows a strictly quantitative approach. It begins with a brief descriptive analysis outlining the distribution of the key variables used, followed by bivariate and multivariate analyses to achieve the defined objectives and test the proposed hypotheses. More specifically, the study applies binary logistic regression and multiple linear regression techniques.

Binary logistic regression is employed to explain the factors that influence or promote TAN positions relative to those that could be classified as GAL, based on a series of independent variables such as self-placement on the ideological scale (measured from 1, "left", to 10, "right"), voting intention or party affiliation (PP, PSOE, Unidas Podemos or Vox), recoded age groups (18–30, 31–44, 45–64, 65+), gender, educational attainment (ordinal) and employment status (employed vs all other categories). Regarding the dependent variable, an aggregate index was constructed from the four analysed topics. As the four positioning variables were measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents a fully progressive (GAL) stance and 10 a fully conservative (TAN) stance, the first step was to calculate the average score before binarising the results. For this, a value of 0 was assigned to individuals with a composite scale score of 5 or lower, and a value of 1 was assigned to individuals scoring between 5.1 and 10. The remaining cases were excluded from the analysis. Although this recoding allows for a clear distinction between individuals positioned on both dimensions, it inevitably results in a loss of information regarding the intensity of these positions. While our objective is not to differentiate individuals with more moderate positions from those with more extreme positions on both dimensions—thus making it impractical to retain the original scale—it is important to note that the presented results stem from grouping individuals with varying attitudinal intensities within the same category. This approach prioritises distinguishing them based on their general dimensional positioning rather than estimating the degree of extremism in their views.

Regarding multiple linear regression, the scale variables related to GAL/TAN topics are included as independent explanatory variables, introduced into the model as *dummy* variables (assigned a value of 1 when the respondent holds extreme positions, i.e., 0–2 or 8–10, and 0 in all other cases within the aggregate index). As control variables, the model incorporates self-placement on the ideological scale and feelings towards the four main parties, measured using a thermometer scale ranging from 0 ("rejection") to 10 ("support"). The dependent variable represents the level of affective polarisation, using political par-

ties as the reference point. It is calculated using the DIPA formula (Crespo, Mora and Rojo, 2024), where individuals are first assigned to a partisan group based on their voting intention or party affiliation. The DIPA score is then derived by summing the absolute differences between the rating assigned to their in-group party and those assigned to all out-group parties on the feeling thermometer. Given the definition of this indicator, the regression analysis is conducted only for voters who express voting intention or affinity towards the PSOE, PP, Unidas Podemos or Vox.

Finally, regarding the operationalisation of GAL/TAN-related issues, the issue-based positioning scales included in the reference survey were formulated as follows:

- On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "women continue to face discrimination, and it is therefore necessary to continue promoting feminist policies that favour women", and 10 means "feminism, rather than defending equality, seeks to attack men", where would you place yourself on this scale?

- On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "priority should be given to environmental protection, even if it leads to slower economic growth and some job losses", and 10 means "economic growth and job creation should take precedence, even if it results in some environmental damage", where would you place yourself?

- On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "the state should allow unrestricted immigration into the country", and 10 means "the state should close its borders and prohibit all immigration", where would you place yourself?

- On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "gender-based violence is a very serious problem, and the state must allocate all necessary resources to combat it", and 10 means "gender-based violence does not exist, and the state should focus on other, more pressing issues", where would you place yourself?

As observed, although the operationalisation is limited to a small number of specific topics, it covers—at least partially—the key axes of socio-cultural conflict that have emerged in Spain in recent years. These issues have played a significant role in structuring political competition and have been central in shaping preferences for emerging political parties.

5. Results

5.1. How do Spaniards position themselves on the GAL/TAN dimension?

Table 1 presents a descriptive analysis of how Spaniards position themselves on various issues associated with the GAL/TAN axis, displaying the mean, standard deviation and number of valid responses for each evaluated question. The results indicate that, on average, positions tend to lean slightly towards the GAL pole, though in some cases, a high standard deviation suggests a wide dispersion in responses, leading to a relative balance between progressive and traditionalist positions. Specifically, the mean score of 4.57 on the feminist policy scale, which measures perceptions of the need for policies addressing persistent gender inequality, suggests a slight inclination towards recognising the necessity of such policies. However, the high standard deviation (3.10) highlights considerable divergence on this issue. Similarly, the mean score of 4.56 on the immigration policy scale suggests that Spaniards are moderately divided between more open and restrictive stances on immigration. Regarding environmental protection versus economic needs, the mean score of 4.24 indicates a somewhat stronger tendency towards GAL or post-materialist views compared to the previous issues. Finally, on the gender-based violence scale, which assesses the perception of its importance as a public issue, the mean score of 1.74 and the low standard deviation indicate a clear inclination towards recognising gender-based violence as a serious problem requiring state intervention. This suggests a stronger consensus on this issue compared to the other three topics. Unlike other areas of debate, this issue does not appear to be highly divisive, as there is a broadly shared understanding across diverse segments of society.

Table 1

Positioning of Spaniards on the GAL/TAN dimensions

	Mean	Standard deviation	Valid N
Need for feminist policies	4.57	3.10	1,226
Environmental protection	4.24	2.99	1,229
Immigration policy	4.56	2.79	1,228
Importance of gender-based violence	1.74	2.59	1,228

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

Graph 3

*Representation of the distribution of responses (%) across the 0-10 scale for each
analysed issue*
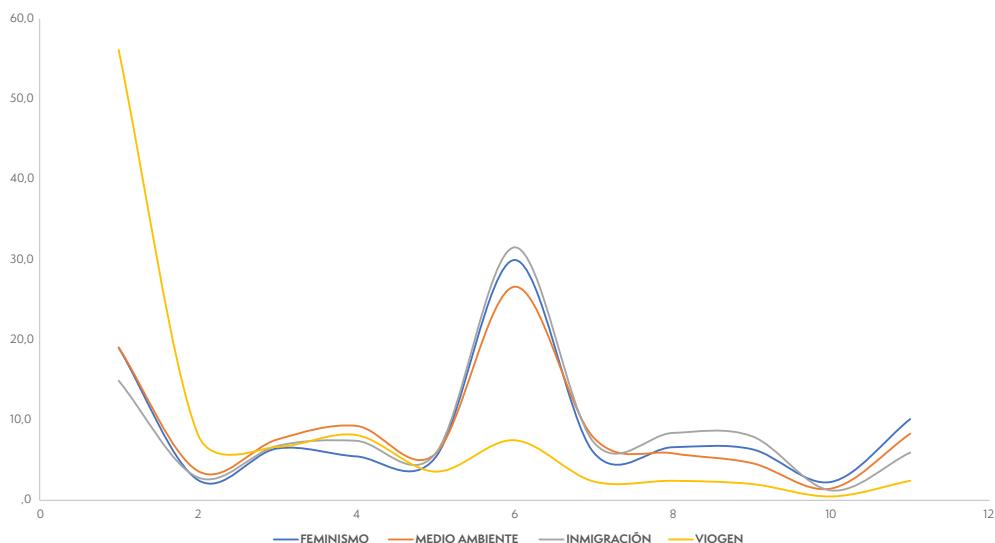
Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP
Research Group (2022).

Additionally, Table 2 shows that Spaniards' positioning on the GAL/TAN dimensions is significantly associated with gender, age, voting intention or party affiliation, and self-placement on the left-right ideological axis. These findings highlight notable socio-political divisions, which are consistent with previous theoretical research. Regarding education level, a greater tendency towards the GAL pole is observed as educational attainment increases, except in matters of immigration and gender-based violence, where no significant differences are found. In terms of employment status, differences between categories are less pronounced and appear to be mediated by age.

The sharpest contrasts emerge between ideological extremes and among voters of Vox and Unidas Podemos, with statistically significant differences at a 99% confidence level. Women, young people, PSOE and Unidas Podemos supporters, and those who identify ideologically with the left tend to position themselves firmly at the GAL extreme, expressing stronger support for feminist policies, environmental protection, open immigration policies and the recognition of gender-based violence as a priority issue. In contrast, men, older individuals, PP and Vox voters, and those with a conservative ideological orientation are more aligned with the TAN extreme, ex-

hibiting markedly more traditionalist, materialist and non-libertarian positions on all these issues. Among political affiliations, Unidas Podemos voters and those identified with the far left (positions 1–2 on the ideological scale) are the most likely to position themselves at the GAL extreme, while Vox voters and those identifying with the far right (positions 9–10) show a clear tendency towards the TAN extreme. These results confirm that new political parties most distinctly reflect the socio-cultural cleavage, which allows them to differentiate themselves within their respective ideological blocs and lends coherence to their political platforms.

The contrasts presented in Table 2 underscore the polarisation surrounding these issues in Spain and highlight the crucial role of political identity and socio-demographic characteristics in shaping citizens' attitudes on the GAL/TAN dimension. In this regard, it is important to emphasise the divergences between younger and older individuals, pointing to a generational divide that may have implications for consensus-building and the legitimacy of certain public policies. This intergenerational conflict, as a foundation of culture wars and cultural backlash, was already identified by scholars such as Norris and Inglehart (2019), demonstrating how generational replacement fosters the adoption of new values, while earlier cohorts, less attuned to these shifts, continue to coexist. The coexistence of cohorts educated and socialised under divergent moral frameworks further exacerbates perceptions of polarisation.

Table 2

Positioning of Spaniards on the GAL/TAN dimensions by gender, age, voting intention or party affiliation, ideology, education and employment status

		Need for feminist policies due to persistent gender inequality			Environmental protection vs economy			Unrestricted immigration policy vs closed borders			Importance of gender-based violence as a public issue vs denial of gender-based violence		
		Mean	SD	SS	Mean	SD	SS	Mean	SD	SS	Mean	SD	SS
Gender	Male	4.71	3.07	N.s.	4.13	2.99	N.s.	4.78	2.80	***	2.34	2.83	***
	Female	4.45	3.13		4.34	2.98		4.36	2.76		1.19	2.21	
Age	18–30	4.12	3.04	***	3.67	2.62	***	3.54	2.56	***	1.51	2.18	N.s.
	31–44	4.17	2.98		3.88	2.75		4.65	2.54		1.77	2.42	
	45–64	4.92	3.13		4.20	3.05		4.84	2.79		1.76	2.65	
	65 and over	4.70	3.14		4.94	3.18		4.64	2.99		1.82	2.85	
Voting intention or party affiliation	PP	5.62	2.71	***	5.05	2.69	***	5.61	2.36	***	2.31	2.84	***
	PSOE	3.90	2.73		4.01	3.00		3.81	2.64		1.14	2.12	
	Vox	7.13	3.14		5.41	2.91		6.96	2.41		3.59	3.28	
	Unidas Podemos (includes IU)	2.71	2.88		2.68	2.80		2.57	2.26		.75	1.43	
Ideology	Left	2.86	3.09	***	3.10	3.22	***	2.84	2.75	***	.57	1.49	***
	Centre Left	3.57	2.64		3.57	2.51		3.66	2.27		1.17	1.80	
	Centre	5.05	2.74		4.39	2.74		4.98	2.52		1.77	2.48	
	Centre Right	6.13	2.82		5.32	2.62		6.20	2.28		3.23	3.05	
	Right	6.21	3.48		6.01	3.53		6.21	3.12		3.18	3.73	
Education	No formal education	5.44	3.36	***	7.56	3.88	**	4.88	4.02	N.s.	1.33	2.83	N.s.
	Primary education	5.14	3.16		4.62	3.17		4.98	3.13		1.69	2.72	
	Secondary education (completed compulsory sec. ed.)	5.10	3.31		4.51	3.52		4.85	3.26		1.57	2.75	
	Secondary education (completed *bachillerato* [A-level equiv.])	4.96	3.03		4.19	2.94		4.60	2.76		1.91	2.61	
	Vocational training	4.76	2.86		4.14	2.75		4.67	2.74		1.74	2.50	
	University studies	4.07	3.14		4.14	2.98		4.33	2.62		1.72	2.57	
Employment status	Employed	4.55	3.11	N.s.	4.02	2.84	***	4.54	2.73	N.s.	1.75	2.53	N.s.
	Other	4.61	3.09		4.54	3.16		4.58	2.86		1.74	2.66	

SS: Statistical significance

Note 1: *** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.05; N.s.: Not significant. Note 2: For bivariate contrasts, a *t*-test was used when the independent variable was dichotomous, and ANOVA when it was multicategorical.

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

The bivariate correlation analysis in Table 3 aligns with previous findings on "voting intention + party affinity" within the GAL/TAN dimension, confirming polarisation among supporters of different parties. Vox supporters are positioned at the TAN extreme, with strong associations particularly in immigration policy and feminism,

key issues for the party. Conversely, supporters of Unidas Podemos and PSOE align with the GAL extreme, with Unidas Podemos showing the highest intensity and both parties registering statistically significant negative correlations on the same issues.

Table 3
Correlation between party affinity and GAL/TAN dimensions

		Need for feminist policies due to persistent gender inequality	Environmental protection vs economy	Unrestricted immigration policy vs closed borders	Importance of gender-based violence as a public issue vs denial of gender-based violence
PSOE	Pearson correlation	-.269	-.095	-.260	-.186
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	1203	1205	1203	1203
PP	Pearson correlation	.210	.204	.236	.177
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	1205	1206	1205	1205
Vox	Pearson correlation	.379	.241	.423	.327
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	1204	1206	1204	1204
Unidas Podemos	Pearson correlation	-.384	-.248	-.364	-.216
	Sig. (bilateral)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	1200	1202	1200	1200

Note 1: Party affinity is measured on a thermometer scale from 0 ("rejection and antipathy") to 10 ("sympathy and support").

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

Those who identify with the PP also tend to lean towards the TAN extreme, albeit less strongly than Vox supporters. In summary, these findings further illustrate how the GAL/TAN axis serves as a key battleground for new political parties, which, within their respective ideological blocs, represent more alternative or socially disruptive positions in relation to hegemonic narratives. Meanwhile, traditional parties exhibit a weaker association with the GAL/TAN divide. However, this does not prevent them from aligning clearly along the axis according to their left-right ideological positioning. Finally, the salience of feminism and immigration underscores their polarising potential, in contrast to the more limited impact of environmentalism—which in Spain remains less politicised and does not provoke significant confrontations— and gender-based violence, which, despite being a subset of feminist discourse, appears to command broader societal consensus.

5.2. What factors influence positioning on the GAL/TAN axis?

The binary logistic regression conducted—whose results are presented in Table 4—confirms that positioning on the GAL/TAN dimension among Spaniards is significantly influenced by various socio-demographic and political variables. In particular, the variables "Voting intention + party affinity", self-placement on the ideological scale and gender carry the greatest weight in determining positioning at either end of this axis. Cultural conflict both reflects and aligns with other political and social cleavages, while also potentially deepening them.

As anticipated in previous bivariate analyses, Vox voters tend to strongly align with the TAN extreme, while Unidas Podemos and PSOE voters position themselves significantly closer to the GAL extreme compared to PP voters. Additionally, political ideology exhibits a clear impact: those on the left tend to position themselves closer to the GAL extreme, whereas those who identify with the right are more likely to align with the TAN extreme. The GAL/TAN positions are deeply intertwined with the broader left-right ideological spectrum, such that left-right semantics effectively capture the GAL/TAN divide—which is not a separate or superior dimension, but rather a complementary or evolving framework. This finding may be explained by two possibilities: individuals may prioritise moral and cultural issues when defining their ideological identity, and, as highlighted by García Sanz, Llamazares and Manrique García (2018), the general ideological dimension, economic views and cultural positions are highly correlated in Spain, with only a small proportion of individuals displaying non-aligned bidimensional positions.

As previously mentioned, gender is a key factor in predicting opinions on the GAL/TAN axis, with women being less likely than men to align with the TAN extreme. Given that feminism is one of the most divisive partisan issues, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that gender is becoming an increasingly influential variable in shaping political attitudes and could even be considered a new political cleavage. Age also plays a role, as individuals over 65 tend to lean more towards the TAN extreme. By contrast, educational attainment and employment status do not exert a significant influence on this dimension. The limited impact of education represents a notable departure from the prevailing academic consensus. In the Spanish context, citizens' values on culturally driven issues do not appear to be shaped by higher levels of education, sophistication or social status. Instead, they seem to be primarily influenced by the period in which individuals underwent political socialisation and their gender identity. At least, this is what the results indicate when the effect of educational attainment is controlled for other variables. The culture war in Spain can be effectively analysed within the classic ideological framework, with the two challenger parties serving as the clearest representatives of the competing moral paradigms. Moreover, gender and the contrast between older and younger generations emerge as significant predictors of individuals' values on these issues. However, the overall explanatory power of the model is 32.7%, suggesting that additional variables not considered in this analysis may further clarify individual positioning on the GAL/TAN dimension. Future research should seek to complete these preliminary models to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.
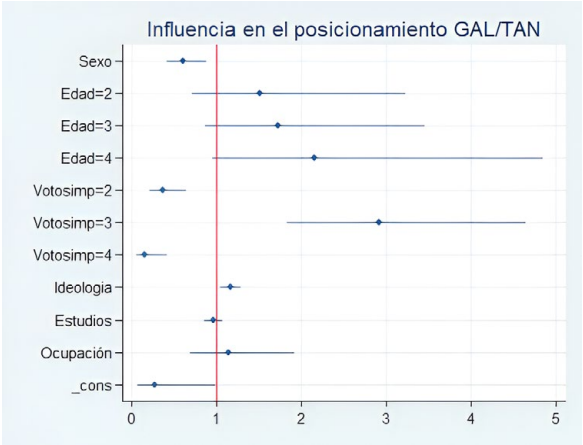
Table 4

Factors influencing positioning on the GAL/TAN dimension

	B	SE and sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	-0.509	(0.192) ***	0.601
Age		N.s.	
31–44	0.416	(0.384) N.s.	1.516
45–64	0.546	(0.654) N.s.	1.727
65 and over	0.766	(0.415) *	2.152
Ideology	0.150	(0.051) ***	1.162
Voting intention + party affinity		***	
PSOE	-1.011	(.285) ***	0.364
Vox	1.071	(.237) ***	2.917
Unidas Podemos	-1.893	(.514) ***	0.151
Education	-0.043	(0.056) N.s.	0.958
Employment status	0.135	(0.264) N.s.	1.145
Constant	-1.347	(0.666) **	0.267
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.327		
Chi-squared	197.188 ***		
Overall predicted %	78		

Note 1: *** Significant at the 99% level; ** Significant at the 95% level; * Significant at the 90% level; N.s.: Not significant.
Note 2: In Voting intention + party affinity, the reference category is PP, and in Age, the reference category is 18–30 years.

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

Graph 4

Coefficient plot of the binary logistic regression model on the factors influencing positioning on the GAL/TAN dimension

Note: Odds Ratios with Confidence Intervals based on the results from Table 4. The reference category for age is 18–30 years, compared to 31–44 (2), 45–64 (3) and 65+ (4). The reference category for Voting intention + party affinity is PP, compared to PSOE (2), Vox (3) and Unidas Podemos (4).

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

5.3. Does positioning on the GAL/TAN dimensions influence affective polarisation among Spaniards?

Having established the factors that shape positioning on the GAL/TAN axis, it is important to take the analysis a step further to assess whether, as other scholars have suggested, these cultural issues also have a direct impact on levels of affective polarisation. The multiple linear regression analysis presented in Table 5 indicates that extreme positioning on GAL/TAN-related topics—particularly feminism and immigration—contributes to explaining affective polarisation towards political parties in Spain (H3). This effect persists even when controlling for political predispositions (party affiliation/rejection and ideological self-placement), which, as expected, play a crucial role in explaining the phenomenon.

Positions on feminism exhibit the highest coefficient, establishing it as one of the epicentres of affective-cultural tensions in Spain. Extreme attitudes on this issue significantly heighten affective partisan polarisation. Both feminism and immigration are highly divisive topics, fostering conflict and interparty hostility while opposing distinct moral frameworks. Regarding the control variables, affinity with Vox and PSOE emerges as a decisive factor, particularly in the case of Vox. The stronger the attachment to the radical right, the greater the level of affective polarisation. Partisan identity within the radical right reinforces in-group favouritism and out-group rejection biases. Moreover, the further right an individual positions themselves on the ideological spectrum, the higher their level of affective polarisation—a trend consistent with the coefficient observed in the feeling thermometer towards Vox.

However, the model accounts for only 10.7% of the variability in the DIPA indicator of affective polarisation, suggesting that additional factors not considered in this analysis also contribute significantly to the phenomenon. Nevertheless, these findings underscore the central role of the culture war over feminism and immigration, as well as the impact of extreme positions on the GAL/TAN axis in these issues. Even when controlling for political predispositions, these factors remain decisive in understanding the intensification of partisan-based affective polarisation. These results not only expand the available evidence on the impact of cultural issues on polarisation dynamics but also raise the question of whether the increasing prominence of these topics on the political agenda could further heighten affective polarisation. Conversely, if the objective is depolarisation and a reduction in emotional tensions, political parties should avoid making these demonstrably sensitive issues a permanent axis of confrontation. Along the same lines, one might hypothesise to what extent the current climate of hostility stems from an overemphasis on these types of issues. Agendas and issues matter. When their nature is predominantly moral, symbolic or identity-based, they are more likely to exacerbate intergroup conflict.

Table 5

Influence of GAL/TAN issues on affective polarisation towards political parties

	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta	
Need for feminist policies due to persistent gender inequality	1.915	.503	.136	***
Environmental protection vs economy	.606	.509	.043	N.s.
Unrestricted immigration policy vs closed borders	1.209	.520	.084	**
Importance of gender-based violence as a public issue vs denial of gender-based violence	.659	.586	.041	N.s.
PSOE affinity/rejection	.337	.105	.150	***
PP affinity/rejection	.002	.101	.001	N.s.
Vox affinity/rejection	.449	.098	.225	***
Unidas Podemos affinity/rejection	.063	.109	.028	N.s.
Ideology	.378	.136	.141	***
(Constant)	6.766	1.043		***
R-squared	.107			
ANOVA	F = 10.478***			

Note: *** Significant at the 99% level; ** Significant at the 95% level; N.s.: Not significant.

Source: own research based on data from the Second National Survey on Political Polarisation, conducted by the CEMOP Research Group (2022).

6. Conclusions

This study has examined the variables shaping citizens' positioning on the GAL/TAN dimension in Spain. Partisan identity and self-placement on the left-right ideological spectrum have been confirmed as key predictors, leading to the conclusion that cultural issue positioning aligns consistently with the traditional ideological scale, thereby challenging the bidimensional analytical perspective. A defining characteristic of polarised societies is the alignment of multiple identities into a single mega-identity, eliminating contradictions or cross-loyalties that might otherwise diminish intergroup contrast (Torcal, 2023). Moreover, the importance of age and gender invites reflection on the extent to which culture wars in Spain manifest primarily as generational and gender-based conflicts. Notably, the association between women and the GAL pole suggests the emergence of a political cleavage based on gender identity, further reinforced by the centrality of feminism in structuring partisan affect.

Finally, this study confirms that extreme attitudes towards feminism and immigration significantly contribute to affective polarisation. Issues matter. Specifically, positioning at the extremes of the GAL/TAN scale on these two topics intensifies individual affective polarisation—a pattern not observed in environmental values or gender-based violence. While these latter two issues also fall within the GAL/TAN

divide, they appear to be more cross-cutting and less susceptible to emotionally charged politicisation. Although post-materialist debates have not been as central in Spain as in Scandinavian democracies or Germany, fully understanding the current political landscape requires incorporating the GAL/TAN axis into the analytical framework. Similarly, we can assert that the content of the political agenda is crucial to understanding the persistence of polarisation. A greater emphasis on feminist debates or the migration phenomenon is likely to deepen the climate of affective polarisation.

Future research should broaden the scope of issues considered in measuring the GAL/TAN dimension, incorporating topics such as historical memory, abortion, transgender rights, education models and animal rights, among others. Moreover, a comparative analysis of the effects of extreme attitudes in the economic sphere versus extreme attitudes in the cultural sphere remains a key area for further exploration. Such an analysis would help determine whether, when additional issues are considered, the autonomous impact of cultural issues on polarisation remains significant.

7. Funding

8. Bibliography

Abou-Chadi, T. and Wagner, M. (2019). The electoral appeal of party strategies in postindustrial societies: when can the mainstream left succeed? *The Journal of Politics, 81*(4), 1405-1419. https://doi.org/10.1086/704436.

Álvarez-Benavides, A. and Jiménez Aguilar, F. (2021). La contraprogramación cultural de Vox: secularización, género y antifeminismo. *Política y sociedad*, *58*(2), e75488. https://doi.org/10.5209/poso.74486.

Bayerlein, M. (2021). Chasing the other «populist zeitgeist»? Mainstream parties and the rise of right-wing populism. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, *62*(3), 411-433. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-021-00299-x.

Bericat Alastuey, E. (2003). ¿Existe riesgo de una nueva guerra cultural en España? En E. Bericat Alastuey (Coord.), *El conflicto cultural en España: acuerdos y desacuerdos entre los españoles.* Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Björkstedt, H. E. and Herne, K. M. (2023). Are we what parties we support? Personality traits and party support in a multi-party system. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 23(3), 652-667. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12366.

Blumberg, Z. (2024). Living in a Post-material World? Assessing the Impact of Economic and non-Economic Shifts on the Success of the German Greens. *German Politics*, 1-32.

Charron, N., Lapuente, V. and Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2020). Uncooperative society, uncooperative politics or both? How trust, polarization and populism explain excess mortality for COVID-19 across European regions. *QoG Working papers*. Disponible en: http://hdl.handle.net/2077/67189.

Crespo Martínez, I., Mora Rodríguez, A. and Rojo Martínez, J. M. (2024). La medición de la polarización afectiva en sistemas multipartidistas. Ponencia presentada en el Seminario «Polarización afectiva: miradas transnacionales y multidimensionales» (University of Murcia, November, 2024). https://www.cemopmurcia.es/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/La-medicion-de-la-polarizacion-afectiva-en-sistemas-multipartidistas.pdf

Crulli, M. (2023). Contextual factors, transnationalism attitudes, and support for GAL-TAN parties within European metropolises: Insights from London. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 26(3), 803-829. https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148123118938.

D'Amore, C., Van Zomeren, M. and Koudenburg, N. (2022). Attitude moralization within polarized contexts: An emotional value-protective response to dyadic harm cues. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 48(11), 1566-1579. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616722110473.

Dassonneville, R., Fréchet, N., Jabbour, A., Ferland, B. and Homola, J. (2024). Party responsiveness over time: From left-right to issue specific dimensions. *Party Politics*. https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688241245065.

Davies, H. C. and MacRae, S. E. (2023). An anatomy of the British war on woke. *Race & Class*, 65(2), 3-54. https://doi.org/10.1177/03063968231164905.

Erzeel, S. and Celis, K. (2016). Political parties, ideology and the substantive representation of women. *Party Politics*, 22(5), 576-586. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068816655561.

Ford, R. and Jennings, W. (2020). The changing cleavage politics of Western Europe. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 295-314. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052217-104957.

Franzé, J. (2017). La trayectoria del discurso de Podemos: del antagonismo al agonismo. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 44, 219-246. https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.44.09.

Galais, C. and Pérez-Rajó, J. (2023). Populist radical right-wing parties and the assault on political correctness: The impact of Vox in Spain. *International Political Science Review*, 44(4), 492-506. https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121231190555.

García Sanz, M. D., Llamazares, I. and Manrique García, M. A. (2018). La competición espacial en Europa tras la Gran Recesión. Un análisis de las posiciones ideológicas ideales y reales en Italia, España y Francia. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, *76*(4), e108. https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2018.76.4.18.002.

Garrido Rubia, A., Martínez Rodríguez, M. A. and Mora Rodríguez, A. (2022). Partidos *spin-off*, partidos *nicho* y derecha radical: el caso de Vox en España. *Revista Internacional de Sociología, 80*(2), e207. https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2022.80.2.21.10.

Gidron, N., Adams, J. and Horne, W. (2023). Who Dislikes Whom? Affective Polarization between Pairs of Parties in Western Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *53*(3), 997-1015. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123422000394.

Guth, J. L. and Nelsen, B. F. (2021). Party choice in Europe: Social cleavages and the rise of populist parties. *Party Politics*, 27(3), 453-464. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068819853965.

Han, K. J. (2023). Issue salience and affective polarization. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2023.2277429.

Harteveld, E. (2021). Fragmented foes: Affective polarization in the multiparty context of the Netherlands. *Electoral Studies*, 71, 102332. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102332.

Henn, M., Oldfield, B. and Hart, J. (2018). Postmaterialism and Young People's Political Participation in a Time of Austerity. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *69*(3), 712-737. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12309.

Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Kamphorst, J. (2024). Field of Education and Political Behavior: Predicting GAL/TAN Voting. *American Political Science Review*, First View, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000583.

Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Wilson, C. J. (2002). Does left/right structure party positions on European integration? *Comparative Political Studies*, *35*(8), 965-989. https://doi.org/10.1177/001041402236310.

Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2022). The social roots of the transnational cleavage: Education, occupation, and sex. *Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Working Paper* (53). https://hdl.handle.net/1814/74806.

Inglehart, R. and Abramson, P. R. (1999). Measuring postmaterialism. *American Political Science Review*, *93*(3), 665-677. https://doi.org/10.2307/2585581.

Johnston, C. D. and Wronski, J. (2015). Personality dispositions and political preferences across hard and easy issues. *Political Psychology*, *36*(1), 35-53. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12068.

Kekkonen, A., Kawecki, D. and Himmelroos, S. (2024). Friends and Foes: Affective Polarization among Finnish Voters. In A. Schoultz and K. Strandberg (Eds.), *Political Behaviour in Contemporary Finland. Studies of Voting and Campaigning in a Candidate-Oriented Political System* (pp. 137-156). London: Routledge.

Kitschelt, H. P. (1988). Left-libertarian parties: Explaining innovation in competitive party systems. *World Politics*, *40*(2), 194-234. https://doi.org/10.2307/2010362.

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S. and Frey, T. (2006). Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45, 921-956. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00644.x.

López Bunyasi, T. and Watts Smith, C. (2019). S*tay woke: A people's guide to making all Black Lives Matter*. New York: NYU Press.

Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ollroge, R. and Sawert, T. (2022). The Cultural Dimension of the Globalization Divide. Do Lifestyle Signals affect Cosmopolitans' Willingness to interact? *Zeitschrift für Soziologie, 51*(3), 263-277. https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-2022-0017.

Polk, J., Rovny, J., Bakker, R., Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., Koedman, J., Kostelka, F., Marks, G., Schumacher, G., Steenberg, M., Vachudova, M. and Zilovic, M. (2017). Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. *Research & politics*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168016686915.

Rojo Martínez, J. M. and Crespo-Martínez, I. (2023). «Lo político como algo personal»: una revisión teórica sobre la polarización afectiva. *Revista de Ciencia Política* (Santiago), *43*(1), 25-48. http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090x2023005000102.

Rovny, J., Bakker, R., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., Marks, G., Polk, J., Steenbergen, M. and Vachudova, M. A. (2022). Contesting Covid: The ideological bases of partisan responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Political Research*, *61*(4), 1155-1164. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12510.

Ryan, A. (2023). Exploring differences in affective polarization between the Nordic countries. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *46*(1-2), 52-74. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12244.

Sandberg, L. A., Bjereld, U., Bunyik, K., Forsberg, M. and Johansson, R. (2019). Issue salience on Twitter during Swedish party leaders' debates. *Nordicom Review*, *40*(2), 49-61. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2019-0033.

Smith, A. E. and Boas, T. C. (2024). Religion, sexuality politics, and the transformation of Latin American electorates. *British Journal of Political Science*, *54*(3), 816-835. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123423000613.

Torcal, M. (2023). *De votantes a hooligans. La polarización política en España*. Madrid: Catarata.

Torcal, M. and Montero, J. R. (1995). Cambio cultural, conflictos políticos y política en España. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 89, 9-34.

Wagner, W., Herranz-Surrallés, A., Kaarbo, J. and Ostermann, F. (2018). Party politics at the water's edge: contestation of military operations in Europe. *European Political Science Review*, *10*(4), 537-563. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773918000097.

Weeks, A. C. and Allen, P. (2023). Backlash against «identity politics»: far right success and mainstream party attention to identity groups. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *11*(5), 935-953. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2022.2065318.

Notes

1   The term post-materialism, originally coined by political scientist Ronald Inglehart in the 1970s, refers to new social values that emphasise issues beyond the economic and labour sphere, such as environmental concerns and minority rights. Additionally, post-materialism has been used to describe the positions represented by one of the poles of the GAL/TAN axis (specifically, the GAL pole), as indicated in the seminal work of Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002). The post-materialism vs traditionalism (or materialism) dichotomy generally applies to cultural issues that diverge from classic ideological-economic divisions, as evidenced by scholars such as Erzeel and Celis (2016) and Sandberg *et al.* (2019). Consequently, it is common to find interchangeable use of the terms GAL/TAN, post-materialism/materialism and culture wars (or battles).

2   The recent establishment of the BSW (Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht – Vernunft und Gerechtigkeit) party in Germany provides a clear example of bidimensionality. This party holds left-wing economic positions while simultaneously adopting anti-immigration and anti-environmental policies.

3   The sampling design follows a stratified multi-stage strategy. Landline and mobile phone numbers were randomly selected within strata. The final selection of individuals was carried out using quotas based on gender and age. The strata were defined by cross-referencing Spain's 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities with number of inhabitants, classified into seven categories: less than or equal to 2,000 inhabitants; 2,001 to 10,000 inhabitants; 10,001 to 50,000 inhabitants; 50,001 to 100,000 inhabitants; 100,001 to 400,000 inhabitants; 400,001 to 1,000,000 inhabitants and more than 1,000,000 inhabitants. At a 95.5% confidence level (two sigmas) with P = Q, the actual margin of error for the full sample is ± 2.8%, assuming simple random sampling. The complete questionnaire, technical report, marginal data and microdata access are available at the following link: https://www.cemopmurcia.es/estudios/polarizacion-politica/.

Alberto Mora Rodríguez

Alberto Mora Rodríguez is a permanent professor of political science at the University of Murcia, where he also coordinates the master's degree in applied political analysis. He is a specialist in applied social research and data analysis, accredited by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS). He serves as technical director of the Centro de Estudios Murciano de Opinión Pública (CEMOP), editor of the journal *Más Poder Local* and researcher at the Chair and Observatory of Public Policies at the University of Murcia. From 2012 to 2021, he was secretary-general of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores en Campañas Electorales (ALICE).

José Miguel Rojo Martínez

José Miguel Rojo Martínez is a predoctoral researcher under the Spanish university lecturer training programme (FPU) at the University of Murcia and a former postgraduate fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS). He is also a member of the Centro de Estudios Murciano de Opinión Pública (CEMOP) and the Chair and Observatory of Public Policies at the University of Murcia.

Alejandro Soler Contreras

Alejandro Soler Contreras is a predoctoral researcher under the Spanish university lecturer training programme (FPU) at the University of Murcia and a former postgraduate fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS). He is also a member of the Centro de Estudios Murciano de Opinión Pública (CEMOP) and the Chair and Observatory of Public Policies at the University of Murcia.

RESEÑAS/
REVIEWS

REVIEWS/RESEÑAS

José Antonio Peña-Ramos, Juan Díez Nicolás y Francisco José Llera Ramo (coords.).
La década del cambio en Andalucía: un análisis multidimensional comparado. Sevilla: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2023

Lourdes López Nieto
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, España
llopeznieto84@gmail.com

El libro objeto de esta recensión es el resultado de una profunda y sistemática labor investigadora de un equipo de académicos de cuatro generaciones distintas que han querido y han sabido plasmar sus vastos conocimientos en una singular e importante aportación científica. Además, el carácter académico y pedagógico del equipo permite que el libro sea accesible tanto para lectores interesados en conocer de forma rigurosa y solvente la vida política española (políticos, periodistas, ciudadanos) como para profesores, investigadores y estudiantes universitarios.

En efecto, el primer volumen de la colección Enfoques que ha puesto en marcha CENTRA es un claro ejemplo del cumplimiento de los objetivos de la fundación, como son el incentivo, la promoción y la divulgación de investigaciones y proyectos en ciencias sociales. La extensa y dinámica actividad desarrollada por la fundación ha logrado alcanzar un merecido prestigio académico y cultural tanto por el rigor académico de los trabajos como por la divulgación de los mismos en forma de publicaciones de carácter científico en diversos formatos asequibles.

El título de la investigación, *La década del cambio en Andalucía: un análisis multidimensional comparado*, se fundamenta y tiene como columna vertebral una encuesta realizada en septiembre de 2021 en Andalucía, cuya ficha técnica, cuestionario, muestra y avance de resultados son recogidos en los cuatro anexos al final del libro. Esta fuente básica del estudio, que no siempre se recoge de forma extensa y detallada en las publicaciones académicas, va precedida de las preguntas y objetivos de la investigación en la Introducción, expuestos de forma breve y clara. Después, los autores describen en el capítulo tercero de forma detallada los diversos fundamentos teóricos que han utilizado para analizar el conjunto de datos técnicos del caso estudiado,

a los que han aplicado seis índices analíticos que han construido para fundamentar sus premisas. Otros capítulos, como el décimo, también incorporan exposiciones de instrumentos metodológicos utilizados, lo que permite el acceso y el aprendizaje a todo tipo de lectores.

Además, como la investigación pretende realizar, como indica el título del libro, un estudio comparado y la evolución de una década, los autores han utilizado otras fuentes, esencialmente de CENTRA y del CIS, entre otras, que ensamblan y analizan conjuntamente con la encuesta que diseñaron y que imagino tuvieron en cuenta, por lo que habrían replicado algunas preguntas de barómetros previos para poder dar solidez a los hallazgos. Esta singular, académica y pedagógica exposición metodológica se aplica a los cinco capítulos centrales del libro (6 a 11) que los profesores analizan acompañados de numerosos y certeros gráficos (figuras y tablas) con sus correspondientes fuentes, que permiten comprender y visualizar con facilidad el contenido de la exposición. Todos los capítulos incorporan conclusiones. Cabe añadir que la parte metodológica del libro se complementa con importantes notas a pie de página (como la 61 y 62) y una extensa bibliografía.

Otra singularidad positiva de este libro es que los capítulos centrales van precedidos de extensas y necesarias descripciones y análisis de los contextos políticos y sociales en los ámbitos territoriales (internacional, nacional y autonómico) en los que se insertan las respuestas de los ciudadanos. El análisis de dichos contextos es imprescindible en todo análisis politológico que aspire a alcanzar el necesario rigor académico para analizar el comportamiento político, si bien últimamente se obvia u oscurece. Esta obra dedica cinco capítulos (1, 2, 4, 5 y 13) a alcanzar este imprescindible objetivo.

Así, el profesor Díez Nicolás analiza en el extenso primer capítulo los efectos de las crisis de 2008 y 2019 en el complejo contexto español y europeo en el que se inserta la década que se investiga, lo que permite presentar unas primeras hipótesis sobre los objetivos y conclusiones. Como ejemplo de ello, encontramos en el capítulo noveno, del mismo autor, el diverso impacto de los tradicionales y nuevos medios de comunicación sobre las principales transformaciones sociales y la posible influencia sobre las expectativas de los electores.

El capítulo segundo lo dedica el profesor Peña-Ramos a estudiar primero el contexto político de la última legislatura larga en la Comunidad Autónoma de Andalucía (2008-2012), germen y previa a la década objeto de análisis que resulta necesario conocer, ya que los cambios se fraguan progresivamente. En la siguiente legislatura, por primera vez el Partido Popular (PP) gana las elecciones autonómicas, pero sin la mayoría absoluta que pronosticaban las encuestas, y gobernó el segundo partido, PSOE, que logró forjar un gobierno de coalición con fuerzas de izquierda (2012-2015). A diferencia de lo que había ocurrido en el ámbito nacional hasta las elecciones generales de noviembre de 2019, en el autonómico y local este tipo de gobiernos ha sido frecuente. En este caso, estas elecciones fueron no concurrentes en esta comunidad con las generales desde 1994 y se produjeron diversas tensiones en el seno de las formaciones políticas que motivaron cambios en los liderazgos de los grandes partidos,

PSOE y PP. Además, el creciente descontento de la sociedad andaluza, de acuerdo con la opinión que se venía manifestando debido en parte a los sucesivos casos de corrupción, provocó que fuera una legislatura breve. Convocadas las elecciones en 2015, se manifestó también en Andalucía el surgimiento de un nuevo sistema de partidos con la llegada por primera vez de Ciudadanos como tercera formación parlamentaria, con quien el PSOE forjó un nuevo gobierno de coalición. La legislatura (2015-2018) supuso la desaparición de UPyD y del Partido Andalucista y el surgimiento de nuevos partidos pequeños de carácter regional, así como la presencia relevante de Podemos en el Parlamento andaluz.

El profesor Llera describe y analiza en el capítulo cuarto los cuatro últimos procesos electorales celebrados (2008, 2012, 2015 y 2018) en Andalucía, tomando como punto de partida en perspectiva comparada las primeras elecciones autonómicas de 1982. Aplica todos los indicadores habituales a los resultados electorales y especialmente los sistemas de partidos (fragmentación, competitividad, polarización ideológica), y estudia los cambios de liderazgo en las formaciones políticas. Analiza la transformación del andalucismo, así como la consiguiente e inestable gobernanza en esta década en la que se produce la primera alternancia política desde el nacimiento de esta comunidad autónoma en las elecciones de 2018 en la que gobernó en coalición el PP con Ciudadanos.

La legislatura de la alternancia, que recupera estabilidad y que dura cuatro años, es descrita y analizada por el profesor Peña-Ramos (capítulo quinto), que avanza tentativamente la consolidación del liderazgo en el PP, en contraste con los otros partidos, y la posible vuelta al bipartidismo, ya que está escrito antes de las últimas elecciones celebradas, de las que se ocupan el profesor Llera y el doctor León Ranero. Estudian y actualizan exhaustivamente los indicadores de las elecciones y el comportamiento electoral de 2022, las primeras de la nueva década (epílogo y capítulo decimotercero), en perspectiva comparada desde 2008. Estos comicios arrojan una mayoría absoluta por primera vez del PP tras la convulsa década política y permiten mostrar la moderación del electorado del centro derecha y refuerza la tesis de la hipotética vuelta al bipartidismo imperfecto, tras un periodo de inestabilidad y polarización.

Hasta aquí he tratado de ponderar dos aspectos relevantes de la investigación recogida en este libro, la descripción transparente y detallada de las fuentes y los aparatos metodológicos utilizados, así como el imprescindible análisis de los contextos políticos en los que se encuentran las respuestas de la encuesta diseñada y utilizada por el equipo de investigación. Los otros siete capítulos de este estudio analizan los ricos datos demoscópicos, esencialmente de la encuesta que diseñaron, sustentados en los otros instrumentos científicos mencionados. Para ello, los autores aplican metodologías consolidadas en el ámbito académico y las analizan de forma agregada y también desglosadas por numerosas variables sociodemográficas y políticas.

El profesor Llera analiza en los dos primeros capítulos vertebradores del estudio (sexto y séptimo) la evolución de los indicadores habituales de carácter esencialmente político (*identidades políticas, alineamientos partidistas, liderazgo* y *gobernanza*)

a partir de trece preguntas del cuestionario y de otras fuentes. También se ocupa del penúltimo capítulo (undécimo), centrado en los posibles *cambios en las pautas de cultura política*, cuestión muy debatida hoy en el ámbito académico y en la opinión publicada. Se trata de un capítulo denso, que se apoya esencialmente en 18 preguntas del cuestionario y de otras fuentes, en las que el autor describe y analiza las respuestas, primero, a partir de los cruces por partidos y provincias, comparando, cuando ello es posible, con el ámbito nacional y que completa con una explicación multivariante.

El capítulo octavo, del profesor Peña-Ramos, acomete el estudio en profundidad del impacto y gestión del COVID-19 en el ámbito autonómico y nacional, habida cuenta del impacto de ambas gestiones en la opinión ciudadana. En el capítulo noveno el profesor Díez Nicolás analiza en qué medida y cómo habrían impactado los cambios sociales en las expectativas de las diversas generaciones de andaluces. Para lograr este objetivo combina métodos diversos, analíticos y descriptivos, sostenidos por investigaciones que permiten la comparación. La continuidad y el cambio generacional del sistema de valores (capítulo décimo) son analizados por los dos profesores senior con el objetivo de responder al enunciado a partir de los habituales indicadores (materialismo<>postmaterialismo y libertad, igualdad y seguridad). Se aplican a los datos, se explican de forma detallada y se presentan conclusiones como en todos capítulos, así como en el capítulo final, Conclusiones, con el que finaliza este sólido y rico libro, que considero es de sumo interés para importantes y diversos tipos de lectores.

REVIEWS/RESEÑAS

José Ramón Montero, Paolo Segatti and Kerman Calvo (eds.). *Religious Voting in Western Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023

Piotr Zagórski
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, España
piotr.zagorski@uam.es

Is religion a relevant determinant of vote choice still today in the secularized societies and post-cleavage politics of Western Europe? This magnificent book convincingly argues that religion continues to structure voting in Western European countries to an important degree. While religious cleavage might be waning or already dead in some cases, what the editors and authors of this important contribution to electoral behaviour literature compellingly argue and masterfully show is that religious voting is well and alive.

Through an incisive theorization based on an impressive review of extant literature and a systemic empirical exploration of role of religiosity in electoral choice, José Ramón Montero, Paolo Segatti and Kerman Calvo, together with an excellent group of authors, offer a new framework of studying religion and voting, moving away from the traditional religious cleavage framework to the more accurate for describing contemporary politics concept of religious voting. Unlike the religious cleavage framework, the concept of religious voting allows for assessing the impact of religion on other parties than the Christian Democratic ones and incorporates the politicization of religious of moral issues by political actors to the equations. The role of political actors and political agency is nicely incorporated to the sociological determinism of the classical conceptions of religious cleavage. Parties shape the voting environment by mobilizing on religious and moral issues. After all, political and ecclesiastic elites can choose to intensify or reduce the conflict over religious issues. Importantly, as religious voting concerns both religious and non-religious voters, it can be applied also to highly secularized contexts.

The book is divided into six parts: the theoretical and comparative chapters, those dedicated to the case studies of the Catholic countries, the religiously mixed countries, the Protestant ones and the United States, with the last part offering the conclusions. Staring with the Karel Dobbelaere's chapter, it offers a thorough account

of conflicts on moral issues, i.e. "bodily self–determination" (abortion, divorce, euthanasia, homosexuality, and suicide) in each of the countries under scrutiny and comparatively grouped by denomination. It also brings in a relevant distinction between societal (creation of a secular subsystem), organizational (loss of control due to specialization, e.g. in Catholic hospitals) and individual (micro–level rejection of certain norms) secularization.

Stefano Bartolini's chapter focuses on differentiating cleavages from group divides. The author pleas for a more considerate use of the concept of cleavage. In contrast to the simple or compound divides, what constitutes a cleavage is a combination of structural, attitudinal and behavioural dimensions with basis in historical divisions and with some overlapping and reinforcement among them. If only one these dimensions is relevant, the Bartolini suggests that instead of cleavage, one can classify the following simple divides: interest divides based on social structure, cultural divides based on values, and behavioural divides. Those divisions for which two dimensions are relevant are classified as compound divides: corporate (structure and behaviour), social (structure and values), and political (values and behaviour). What follows is a detailed description of cleavage structuring based on the concepts of boundary and mobility with focus on the structural, normative and organisational dimensions. In the last part of the chapter, Bartolini applies this theory to religious voting, showing that while religiously based 'interest', 'cultural', and 'membership' divides are simple divides, religious cleavage combines denomination, religiosity and religious group membership, reflecting the specific trajectory of State —and nation— building. Religious voting, according to Bartolini, emerges from the following two compound divides: 1) issues more or less intermittently activated by membership organizations (religious issue–voting); 2) strong political identities of denominational groups (religious ideological–voting).

José Ramón Montero's chapter proposes to distinguish religious cleavages from religious coalescence and religious voting offering three significant contributions. First, Montero sheds new light on the relationship between cleavages and voting, sometimes taken for granted in electoral behaviour. Second, he develops the concept of religious coalescence to account for the fact that neither in France nor in Spain and Portugal had the Christian Democratic parties endured, despite of confrontations between the Church and the State, and, in the case of the Nordic countries and to some extent in Britain and Scotland, the conflict between Churches and States was non–existent. Third, according to this account, religious voting occurs when 'religious denomination or religious practice are aligned with vote choice once activated by party and ecclesiastical elites in electoral contests' (p. 87) and thus incorporating both top–down and bottom–up mechanisms behind the impact of religion on voting. In an impressive *tour de force* review of the literature on cleavages, Montero offers a persuasive defence of the importance of religion for explaining vote choice across time and space, and a convincing argument on why it is better to use the concept of religious voting rather than religious cleavage to assess the impact of religiosity on the vote in the last decades. Montero's and Bartolini's contributions are relevant not only for studies of religious voting but to the field of electoral behaviour at large.

What follows are three comparative chapters. In the first place, Ferruccio Biolcati and Cristiano Vezzoni describe the process of secularization focusing on the decline in church attendance and pointing towards the importance of the starting point on which such dynamics depend upon. Second, Rosa M. Navarrete, Guillermo Cordero and Jaime Balaguer trace the relationship between religiosity and ideology, demonstrating that religious denomination, church attendance, religious belief, and confidence in religious institutions are all positively correlated with right-wing ideology. However, this correlation is quite low in the Protestant North and although strong, steadily decreasing, in the Catholic South. It is also shown that religious polarization reinforces the effects of religiosity on ideology. Lastly, the authors find confirmation for a similar correlation between religiosity and ideology in the context of the religious marketplace of the United States. Third, Alberto Sanz, Stefano Camatarri, Paolo Segatti and José Ramón Montero focus on eliciting to what extend religiosity impacts the vote choice for all parties and not only the Christian Democratic ones. This chapter differentiates between party-based religious voting which has to do with party identification and election-based religious voting in which polarization on moral issues plays a central role. Assessing the effects of religious affinity between voters and parties and polarization on moral issues on vote choices, the authors find that positive or negative concerns towards religions are indeed politicized in two modes of religious voting: party-based and election-based, with the first one having a more substantial significance.

The subsequent 14 chapters dedicated to case studies of Catholic, Mixed, and Protestant countries offer an impressive array of knowledge on the idiosyncrasies and commonalities in religious voting across Western Europe and the United States. To name only the key findings, it is shown that, in Austria, the effects of religion on vote choice are largely indirect; in Italy, the hitherto very strong religious cleavage has practically disappeared; in Ireland, rapid secularization and successive scandals involving the Catholic Church reduced the salience of the moral agenda; in France, on the contrary, the influence of religiosity on voting is persistent despite the historical separation of the State and the Church; in Spain, religious voting regain its vitality after the ecclesiastical and political elites reacted to the progressive policies on moral issues of Rodríguez Zapatero; in Portugal, religious voting seems buried but not yet dead; in Germany, striking differences in religious voting exist between its East and West parts (with stronger secularization in the latter) and between Catholics and Protestants (with the latter decreasing in church membership); in the Netherlands, while religious voting is becoming less relevant for the Catholics, it gains strength for the Calvinists; in Switzerland, religious cleavage, once central to explaining electoral competition, has faded away; in Scotland the religious divides are still large, and, in Britain, relatively stable; in the Nordic countries, although the Christian Democratic parties become increasingly marginal in these secular societies, religiosity still plays a role and religious conflicts present; and, finally, in the US, religion is a factor that explains vote choice and party identification to a similar degree to the socio-economic variables, with a particularly strong association between the Evangelical Protestants and the Republican vote, and between high value ascribed to religiosity in life and the Republican preference.

While impressive in depth and scope, the volume nevertheless suffers from some limitations or rather some issues that could have been incorporated or further developed. Some of these shortcomings are acknowledged by the editors in the conclusions, however, I suppose it is pertinent to gather them here for future studies that for sure will follow the framework of this book.

As the authors duly note, secularization does not necessarily translate into weaker religious voting. However, what I missed in this volume is an assessment until which point the idea that those who are still in the increasingly smaller religious camp become radicalized, and thus religious voting might actually become reinforced with the passage of time, stands empirical scrutiny. Consider the evolution of the share of *dominicantes* (those who attend church each Sunday) and *communicantes* (those who also take communion) from another context – the Catholic Poland. While the former clearly decreases since 1980s', the latter is on the rise. This relates to the feeling of threat, of the loss of status, of becoming a threatened minority (subjectively rather than objectively but nevertheless), which has not been assessed in this volume as a possible nexus between religiosity and the vote. Similarly, disentangling the effects of affective communitarian feelings, especially salient in the rural areas, in which the Church plays also a distinctive institutional role compared to the urban ones, from religious belief might be a worthwhile endeavour and has not been assessed yet in detail. Is it group belonging or moral traditionalism which makes religious rural dwellers support right-wing parties?

This brings me to the reduced interest this volume has placed on eliciting the role of religion in support for far right or populist radical right parties. Following Bartloni's framework from Chapter 3, voting for populist radical right parties would not be considered religious voting because it lacks a reference to a distinctive social group, while religion always refers to a stratification divide of membership in a denomination or non-membership. However, populist radical right parties many times "hijack" religion in that their rhetoric calls for a restoration of native religious identity and symbols, fighting back against secularization, immigration, and multiculturalism. "Islamization," "infiltration," and "invasion" are an inexorable part of this populist imaginary that mobilizes grievances over immigration (Marzouki et al., 2016). Islam is practically missing from this volume and one could argue that it is increasingly relevant for vote choice in Europe. Muslims and especially Muslim migrants are framed as a threat to national identity, traditional culture, security and so on. While religiosity seems not that relevant for the support for this type of parties in Western Europe (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022), the issue of Muslim migration should be accounted for in studies of religious voting in Europe. As well as the role of Catholic and Protestant religious denominations serving as possible vaccines against radical-right voting should be addressed in future studies.

In short, this book is on a straight way to becoming a landmark study of religion and voting. The framework proposed by the authors can and should be applied to other contexts: e.g., can Evangelical support for Bolsonaro in Brazil be considered religious voting? Can religious voting exist in the highly secularized Czechia? This volume will help to answer these and other questions related to the influence of religion on electoral politics for the years to come.

José Ramón Montero, Paolo Segatti and Kerman Calvo (eds.),
Religious Voting in Western Democracies.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023

https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.106

References

Marcinkiewicz, K., and Dassonneville, R. (2022). Do religious voters support populist radical right parties? Opposite effects in Western and East-Central Europe. *Party Politics, 28*(3), 444-456.

Marzouki, N., McDonnel, D., and Roy, O. (eds) (2016). *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion.* London: Hurst & Co.

REVIEWS/RESEÑAS

José Manuel Jiménez Cabello. *El fenómeno de la custodia compartida en Andalucía.* Sevilla: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces, 2024

Paloma Castro–Fernández
Instituto de Productos Naturales y Agrobiología (IPNA–CSIC), España
paloma.castro@ipna.csic.es

En los últimos años ha ido adquiriendo relevancia, tanto en el discurso público como en la investigación social, el análisis de los procesos judiciales de divorcios, los acuerdos por la custodia compartida y la posterior reorganización familiar. Es comprensible, dado que las estadísticas y datos judiciales avalan esta expansión de la custodia compartida, hasta el punto de superar a la custodia otorgada exclusivamente a la madre; en otras palabras, hay un cambio evidente en los modelos de familia y parentalidad. Esto se puede interpretar como un dato positivo ya que, por una parte, los acuerdos entre progenitores y la alternancia de hogares se han probado como elementos beneficiosos en la crianza de los menores. Además, implica un cambio en las estructuras sociales de roles de género para los cuidados y la inserción laboral que ha permitido esta equitatividad.

Todo esto y más es objeto de estudio en *El fenómeno de la custodia compartida en Andalucía*, de José Manuel Jiménez Cabello, profesor del Departamento de Sociología de la Universidad de Granada. El libro es editado por la Fundación Pública Andaluza Centro de Estudios Andaluces (CENTRA Ciencias Sociales) en su colección "Actualidad", lo que es garante de una publicación con nivel académico notable. En este caso, encontramos efectivamente un trabajo de investigación innovador, riguroso y relevante, que nos permite reflexionar al respecto de los cambios acaecidos en España que han permitido la evolución de este modelo de asignación de custodia, que incluye al final una visión prospectiva y propositiva.

El autor, especializado en el análisis sociológico de las rupturas, divorcios y los mecanismos legales para la reconfiguración familiar posterior, utiliza una fuerte base empírica para entender y explicar este aumento de resoluciones de custodia compartida en la sociedad andaluza. Para ello, parte de estadísticas que muestran que, por primera vez, la custodia compartida es más frecuente que otras modalidades,

como la custodia exclusiva. Desde ahí, el libro diserta por los detonantes y resultados del fenómeno, un análisis pormenorizado de la situación legislativa estatal y autonómica, el papel de los diferentes agentes que son partícipes en los procedimientos legales de divorcio, y finaliza con la aplicación de estos resultados a la formulación de guías y recomendaciones de actuación. De forma más detallada, se expone la situación estadística y empírica de los trabajos realizados hasta el año 2020, con una amplia contextualización del matrimonio y el divorcio en Andalucía, así como sus diversas dimensiones y componentes.

Este trabajo destaca la pertinencia del estudio de la custodia compartida, dado que se posiciona como un fenómeno en crecimiento, que además manifiesta otros eventos en la realidad social española, reflejo de cambios económicos, familiares y de género. Además de un análisis holístico de la cuestión, el libro se enfoca sobre todo en la dimensión judicial y legal de las negociaciones sobre custodia compartida; si bien no deja de mencionar otros factores, como la transición a un modelo de cuidados menos desigual entre hombres y mujeres, con menor división sexual del trabajo, y que implica un acercamiento al equilibrio en las expectativas sociales y culturales sobre la paternidad, con una mayor implicación emocional de los padres. Este reajuste en los valores y comportamientos concurre con las características regionales y evolución de cada zona, por lo que el autor también dedica una amplia parte a analizar el caso concreto de Andalucía.

El libro es una contribución sustancial, tanto teórica como empírica, estructurada bajo un esquema de investigación clásico: empieza con una introducción, seguida de un estado de la cuestión, la explicación de la metodología, los resultados detallados, y termina con la conclusión, limitaciones y guías de actuación. Este enfoque nos conduce por el libro de forma lógica y secuencial, comenzando con un marco general en el que se definen las características, factores y variaciones observadas en las dinámicas familiares tradicionales en España y, más concretamente, en el territorio andaluz. Señala los diferentes cambios sociales, económicos y legislativos que han dado pie a un aumento de las rupturas de pareja, los divorcios y las reconfiguraciones sociales. Algunas de las cuestiones sociológicas que se destacan son la legalización del divorcio en España, el descenso del tamaño de los hogares, la inserción de la mujer en el mundo laboral o los cambios normativos en las diferencias y expectativas de género.

También se posiciona la custodia como un tema de estudio relevante a través de las fuentes de datos secundarios existentes. Por ejemplo, el autor hace notar que más de la mitad de los divorcios en Andalucía se dan con menores al cargo. Además de los cambios históricos y legales que respaldan un cambio en la percepción social del divorcio y los cuidados, existen también múltiples claves en las que el autor se detiene a lo largo de la investigación, como las variables sociodemográficas, el número de hijos, la región, la duración del matrimonio, la orientación sexual o el tipo de ruptura. Esta y otras estadísticas contextualizan el estado de la cuestión, y construyen una buena introducción general a estudiosos de cualquier nivel interesados por el fenómeno de la custodia.

La conclusión clara del análisis de fuentes secundarias realizado en el estado de la cuestión es que el proceso de asignación de custodia en divorcios es un recurso legal sustentado en diversas cuestiones socioeconómicas, que parecen resultar claves para el proceso de negociación y el beneficio del menor. Sin embargo, aunque se mencionan variables como posición socioeconómica y laboral, nivel educativo, nacionalidad o edad, no se profundiza en ellas como se hace en factores territoriales y judiciales. Por ejemplo, uno de los principales argumentos es que el cambio en los roles de género en el trabajo y los cuidados ha impulsado la tendencia a la custodia compartida, como resultado de un cambio del rol tradicional asociado a las mujeres. Esta idea resulta de lo más sugerente y analítica, si bien en este trabajo concreto queda en un segundo plano ante los objetivos de la investigación. Aun así, se hace un repaso suficiente por contexto, variables y eventos clave para explicar el incremento de procesos judiciales de negociación de la custodia de los hijos.

Lo que más diferencia la construcción de este objeto de estudio es que, mientras aborda la cuestión del papel de las instituciones y los actores implicados con un rol más administrativo y procedimental, ofrece una nueva perspectiva a los trabajos preexistentes de este fenómeno, que han estado históricamente más orientados a la visión de las familias. Las otras dimensiones, si bien son mencionadas y resaltadas, no se estudian con tanta profundidad, pues distan de los objetivos propuestos en la investigación. Por ello, *El fenómeno de la custodia compartida en Andalucía* es un buen trabajo con el que contextualizar de forma general y, a su vez, profundizar en el papel del sistema judicial, los operadores jurídicos y la legislación al respecto.

A continuación, en el apartado de métodos se diseña una propuesta de estrategia con robustez metodológica, fundamentada en la triangulación de técnicas y la combinación de diferentes fuentes de datos, tanto de naturaleza cualitativa como cuantitativa. En este sentido, se combinan entrevistas a agentes del sistema jurídico, aunque también se cuenta con la participación de algunos miembros de asociaciones y progenitores; una descripción de las principales estadísticas al respecto de divorcios y custodias hasta 2020; el autor termina con un análisis de una muestra de actas judiciales andaluzas que acreditan estos procesos. Los resultados de la triangulación aportan consistencia y fiabilidad, la elección de las técnicas es adecuada y pertinente a los objetivos específicos, y su descripción asegura la replicabilidad y validez. En definitiva, un diseño metodológico que abarca al completo todos los datos disponibles.

Con respecto al objetivo general de conocer el fenómeno de la custodia compartida, este queda cubierto en su mayor parte, a la par que aporta un nuevo enfoque a este campo de estudio. Mediante datos y conclusiones que son relevantes y novedosos, examina en profundidad algunas de las dimensiones institucionales y normativas menos incididas desde el estudio sociológico. Por otro lado, las entrevistas realizadas a operarios judiciales ponen sobre la mesa nuevos discursos y aspectos poco priorizados desde la judicialización y la Administración; por otro, el uso y análisis de contenido de actas judiciales es una técnica innovadora en esta área, con la que el autor propone una vía de investigación poco explotada en las ciencias sociales.

Con este recorrido teórico y empírico, en la discusión de los resultados se expone la situación y retos de la dimensión judicial de las custodias de menores en Andalucía. Mediante la evidencia de los mapas discursivos construidos en base a los relatos de diferentes actores implicados, se destacan los puntos fundamentales a tener en cuenta para promover un correcto funcionamiento del proceso jurídico que respalde a las familias y proteja a los menores. Así, una de las fortalezas de este trabajo es evidenciar los problemas lastrados por algunos componentes que no han recibido tanta atención desde el estudio de las negociaciones de custodias: la ley estatal y el impacto de diseñar una autonómica, los juzgados como lugares físicos y unidades administrativas, o el papel de los abogados y los equipos psicosociales. También aporta conclusiones sobre factores familiares y emocionales que afectan en la negociación de la custodia compartida, contribuyendo a trabajos previos en este campo.

Aunque se aluden a otras cuestiones (los criterios de las pensiones, las dinámicas familiares, el cambio en los roles maternos y paternos, la cuestión de los servicios de mediación, los equipos psicosociales y el consenso familiar), gran parte de la discusión gira en torno a las herramientas judiciales disponibles para mejorar estos procesos. A este respecto, el autor presenta diferentes factores presentes en los procesos de ruptura con hijos con menores que actúan como mecanismos de diálogo, aceptación y negociación. Esto ofrece una visión amplia de las cuestiones necesarias para obtener buenos resultados, en los que prevalezca el interés del menor e impere un proceso satisfactorio para los padres.

La evidencia señala que Andalucía sigue una evolución similar a la estatal y de otras comunidades, pero el autor sugiere que hay particularidades regionales que la diferencian. Durante el análisis de las entrevistas se invita a replantear el actual marco legal con el que cuenta la comunidad autónoma, proponiendo una ley autonómica y otras medidas como la inversión en juzgados especializados, la mejora de la infraestructura y aumentar el papel de equipos mediadores. Si bien los diferentes discursos parecen estar de acuerdo en que el aumento de medios mejoraría sustancialmente el desarrollo de procesos de negociación de custodia compartida, cabe considerar la dificultad que puede suscitar desarrollar e implementar de forma efectiva estas propuestas.

El autor busca con este libro cuestionar el actual modelo judicial autonómico con respecto a los casos de custodia compartida, para lo que realiza un diagnóstico integral del ámbito legal aplicando métodos estadísticos y de análisis del discurso. Esto aporta un marco empírico y una visión global del proceso de asignación de custodia compartida en Andalucía sin precedente. Gracias a este trabajo, se establece una guía de actuación recomendada y unas directrices prácticas que son el resultado del consenso de las voces recogidas en el trabajo de campo. La principal conclusión es la importancia de políticas familiares específicas para estos procesos que incentiven la negociación y agilicen la toma de decisiones, estableciendo estrategias para proteger a los menores afectados. Además, se muestra que las intervenciones no solo benefician a la familia, sino también a los agentes jurídicos y el sistema en general.

Sin embargo, tal y como manifiesta el autor, algunas cuestiones quedan sin resolver, dejando un largo recorrido por delante para continuar desarrollando esta investigación. En un entorno social marcado por el descenso de la nupcialidad, es conveniente tener en cuenta que abordar la custodia de los hijos tras los divorcios como única perspectiva elimina de la ecuación a un importante grupo poblacional de parejas que no están vinculadas legalmente a través del matrimonio o mecanismos legales similares. Otros asuntos quedan sin tratar, especialmente desde el punto de vista de las familias y, sobre todo, de los menores.

La importancia de este libro radica en unos objetivos de investigación enfocados a los operadores jurídicos y el estudio-diagnóstico que señala directamente áreas de mejora concretas. En conclusión, es un trabajo necesario principalmente para entender el papel de la legislación, los procesos judiciales y los juzgados en la negociación de custodias compartidas. Además, el autor aporta una mirada específica al fenómeno y una contribución significativa a la sociología jurídica y la sociología de la familia, no solo por el carácter descriptivo del libro, sino, sobre todo, por la capacidad de transferir los resultados de la investigación en forma de guía con una contribución específica para las Administraciones encargadas de diseñar planes de actuación, desarrollar protocolos y elaborar proyectos normativos.

REVIEWS/RESEÑAS

Antonio López Peláez y Gloria Kirwan (eds.). *The Routledge International Handbook of Digital Social Work.* New York: Routledge, 2023

Emilio Díaz de Mera
Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, España
ediazdemerapelaez@gmail.com

Nos encontramos ante un libro que aborda un tema clave en el presente y el futuro de las profesiones de ayuda, y específicamente del trabajo social: la digitalización. En este *Handbook*, publicado por la editorial Routledge[1], se aborda desde un enfoque internacional comparado el desarrollo de una nueva especialización en las profesiones de ayuda: el trabajo social digital. Consta de 42 capítulos, en los que colaboran más de 60 autores de países de los cinco continentes. Se trata de un proyecto liderado por dos editores, el profesor Antonio López Peláez (UNED, España) y la profesora Gloria Kirwan (RCSI, Irlanda), con una larga especialización en este ámbito.

Hay que destacar que es el primer *Handbook* sobre esta temática y supone una aportación de referencia en la disciplina de trabajo social. Prueba de ello son las reseñas breves sobre este *Handbook* que se publican en el libro y en la página web de la editorial, firmadas por personalidades de la máxima relevancia en trabajo social: Annamaría Campanini (presidenta de la IASSW), Sangmok Suh (presidente de la ICSW), Neil Gilbert (catedrático de Trabajo Social en UC Berkeley), Ming-sum Tsui (catedrático de Trabajo Social en Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Hong-Kong, China), Reyhan Atasü (catedrática de Trabajo Social en la Universidad Hacettepe, Ankara, Turquía), Mark Doel (catedrático de Trabajo Social en Sheffield Hallam University, UK), Alfonso Lara (director ejecutivo de la European Social Network) y Joseph Himle (catedrático de Trabajo Social en la University of Michigan). No es común aportar tal cantidad de breves reseñas, 8, y nos sirve como botón de muestra del interés que ha generado este libro en la comunidad académica.

Ya nadie duda de la importancia de las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, de la digitalización y de la inteligencia artificial, en el ámbito de las profesiones de ayuda, incluidos el trabajo social y los servicios sociales. En los últimos diez años se han puesto en marcha iniciativas innovadoras en el ámbito de la Administración electrónica y la intervención social *online*. Las competencias digitales son

ya competencias estratégicas en las profesiones de ayuda, y específicamente en el trabajo social (tanto desde la perspectiva de los usuarios como de los profesionales y de los estudiantes de trabajo social) (López Peláez, Erro-Garcés y Gómez, 2020). Lo que se denomina el «trabajo social digital» se ha convertido ya en área de especialización en el ámbito académico y en el profesional (López Peláez *et al.*, 2024). La brecha digital de acceso y de uso, y lo que se ha definido como vulnerabilidad digital, no puede dejarse al margen cuando hablamos de exclusión social. Las tres grandes organizaciones internacionales de trabajo social (la Federación Internacional de Trabajadores Sociales, la Asociación Internacional de Escuelas de Trabajo Social y el Consejo Internacional de Bienestar Social) han organizado congresos, seminarios y talleres sobre el trabajo social digital, y la digitalización ha sido uno de los temas claves abordados por la 59.ª sesión de la Comisión de Desarrollo Social de la ONU celebrada en 2021.

En las Facultades de Trabajo Social de todo el planeta se han puesto en marcha programas específicos de formación vinculados con las competencias digitales, un proceso que se ha visto impulsado por la pandemia de la COVID-19. En este sentido, uno de los efectos de la pandemia de la COVID-19 ha sido, precisamente, la aceleración del proceso de digitalización en el que se encontraban ya inmersas las Administraciones públicas (López Peláez *et al.*, 2022). El confinamiento, la necesidad de salir al encuentro de los usuarios utilizando las nuevas tecnologías y las redes sociales y la Administración electrónica han impulsado la incorporación de las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (López Peláez, Marcuello, Castillo y Almaguer-Kalixto, 2020), incluyendo también la inteligencia artificial. Al mismo tiempo, el entorno virtual se ha convertido en un ámbito de análisis, investigación e intervención, que no puede quedar al margen del trabajo social (tanto para evaluar como para intervenir) (Castillo, López Peláez, Marcuello y Domínguez, 2022).

¿Cuáles serían los retos derivados de la digitalización? Podemos tentativamente indicar los siguientes: en primer lugar, la transformación digital de la sociedad; en segundo lugar, la redefinición de la ciencia del trabajo social en un entorno digital; en tercer lugar, los métodos y programas que se están llevando a cabo en la intervención social; en cuarto lugar, los dilemas éticos; en quinto lugar, las buenas prácticas desde una perspectiva internacional comparada; y en sexto lugar, las tendencias de futuro en el ámbito del trabajo social digital. *The Routledge International Handbook of Digital Social Work* es el primer libro que ofrece una perspectiva amplia e integradora, y totalmente actualizada, sobre estos y otros grandes retos que afronta la digitalización en el ámbito de los servicios sociales y el trabajo social. Desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes y profesores que van a utilizar este *Handbook* como texto de referencia, y también de los profesionales, hasta ahora no estaba disponible un texto que abordara estos temas clave de forma sistemática y con académicos relevantes especializados en las múltiples dimensiones del trabajo social digital.

A lo largo de los seis bloques y cuarenta y dos capítulos que componen este libro se responde de manera precisa a los retos anteriormente expuestos. En la introducción, los editores analizan detalladamente la estructura y el contenido del libro, y señalan

dos puntos básicos para abordar el entorno digital: en primer lugar, la tecnología no es neutral; en segundo lugar, las competencias digitales son básicas para aprovechar la digitalización y para afrontar los efectos no deseados, desde una perspectiva basada en los principios éticos del trabajo social.

En el primer bloque, «Replanteando el trabajo social en una sociedad digital», se presentan seis artículos que abordan seis temas clave: la evolución de la digitalización en trabajo social en los últimos años (capítulo 2, «Trabajo Social Digital: la oportunidad de la digitalización. Un meta-análisis»), el papel de las TICs en Trabajo Social (capítulo 3, «Trabajo Social: Tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Desarrollo e Innovación»), la metodología de Photovoice y la digitalización (capítulo 4, «Photovoice en tiempos del Trabajo Social Digital»), las relaciones en red (capítulo 5, «Relaciones en red: la práctica del Trabajo Social basado en relaciones en la era digital»), el trabajo digital para potenciar la vida en comunidad (capítulo 6, «Herramientas tecnológicas para las comunidades de convivencia») y la movilización colectiva en el contexto digital (capítulo 7, «Movimientos sociales y trabajo social colectivo en la era digital»).

En el segundo bloque temático, «Conformando la ciencia del Trabajo Social en la sociedad digital», se presentan 7 capítulos, que abordan las siguientes temáticas: la sociocibernética y el trabajo social (capítulo 8, «Sociocibernética para el Trabajo Social: una aproximación de segundo orden»), el Big Data y el análisis de redes sociales (capítulo 9, «Big Data y redes sociales: oportunidades para la investigación y la práctica del trabajo social»), el papel de X (antes Twitter) en el análisis de los servicios sociales (capítulo 10, «Análisis de las interacciones de los ciudadanos en twitter relacionadas con los servicios sociales y el COVID-19»), artefactos virales, YouTube y trabajo social (capítulo 11, «Artefactos virales: respuestas del trabajo social a la COVID-19 a través de Youtube como archivo»), el trabajo social digital en entornos superdiversos (capítulo 12, «Superdiversidad y Trabajo Social Digital»), la observación directa en el entorno digital (capítulo 13, «Investigación en Trabajo Social: Digitalización de la técnica de incidentes críticos para el siglo XXI mediante diarios sonoros») y el trabajo con grupos en el entorno digital (capítulo 14, «Trabajo en grupos sociales digitales: Evolución, estado del arte y agenda de investigación renovada»).

El tercer bloque temático, «Trabajo social digital en la práctica», se divide en dos secciones. En la sección A se centra en el trabajo social digital con diferentes colectivos. Por ejemplo, con personas mayores y robots (capítulo 15, «Tecnologías de apoyo, robótica y práctica del trabajo social gerontológico»), con atención a la infancia en los servicios sociales (capítulo 16, «Tecnología digital en los servicios públicos de atención a la infancia»), con los menores vulnerables (capítulo 17, «La digitalización del trabajo social con niños y ancianos vulnerables en la República Checa: Un reto para el futuro»), con personas con diversidad funcional (capítulo 18, «Trabajo social digital y servicios a las personas con diversidad funcional»), con familias (capítulo 19, «El uso de Facebook en la práctica del trabajo social con familias: ¿Seguridad o vigilancia?») y la tecnología y la infancia (capítulo 20, «Tecnología e infancia: ¿qué rol desempeña el trabajo social?»).

En la sección B del bloque 3, «Métodos de trabajo social digital», se presentan diversas metodologías que se utilizan en el ámbito de la intervención social digital. Por ejemplo, las intervenciones basadas en contar historias (capítulo 21, «Narrativa digital en el trabajo social»), las estrategias para abordar la violencia doméstica y el abuso (capítulo 22, «La interfaz entre la tecnología y la violencia doméstica y los malos tratos: Retos y oportunidades para la práctica del trabajo social»), la asistencia digital (capítulo 23, «La Aceleración de la Implantación del Teletrabajo Social como Fórmula de Intervención Complementaria: Teletrabajo, Teleasistencia y Visitas Domiciliarias Online»), la intervención comunitaria con personas mayores (capítulo 24, «Puentes tecnológicos en el trabajo social comunitario y la atención a las personas mayores en Japón»), la innovación social (capítulo 25, «Innovación Social y Tecnología para el Trabajo Social: Una experiencia de formación e implementación en Santiago de Chile»), la soledad no deseada (capítulo 26, «La pandemia de la soledad no deseada: Nuevas estrategias desde el trabajo social digital»), las metodologías docentes (capítulo 27, «Educación en Trabajo Social y Digitalización: El aula en transición») o la enseñanza *online* (capítulo 28, «Reflexiones sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en línea a distancia de emergencia. Educación para el trabajo en grupo durante Covid-19: Sudáfrica»).

El cuarto bloque aborda un tema clave en cualquier transformación tecnológica, y por supuesto en nuestro contexto marcado por la digitalización y la inteligencia artificial: los principios éticos. Me ha parecido particularmente relevante que colaboren en este bloque dos de los expertos más reputados a nivel internacional en la ética del trabajo social: Frederic G. Reamer y Allan Edward Barsky. El cuarto bloque, «La ética del trabajo social digital», aborda temas que forman parte de las preocupaciones y los debates en la práctica profesional y en la academia. Por ejemplo, los riesgos éticos (capítulo 29, «Tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en el trabajo social: Cuestiones éticas y de gestión de riesgos»), la privacidad (capítulo 30, «Privacidad y 'Big Data' en la investigación en Trabajo Social: Un enfoque basado en el riesgo»), la inteligencia artificial (capítulo 31, «Inteligencia Artificial y Trabajo Social: Aportaciones para una Inteligencia Artificial Ética al Servicio de las Personas»), las situaciones de emergencia (capítulo 32, «Ética y tecnología en situaciones de emergencia») y la vigilancia y el control (capítulo 33, «Mecanismos de poder en la era digital: vigilancia, privacidad y límites profesionales en la práctica del trabajo social»).

En el bloque quinto, «El Trabajo Social Digital y la Digitalización de las Instituciones de Bienestar Social: Oportunidades, retos y casos nacionales», se presentan buenas prácticas en diferentes países, como Chile (capítulo 34, «El uso de las tecnologías como aliadas en el trabajo social: la experiencia chilena de 'Reconectando'»), Estados Unidos de América y España (capítulo 35, «Integrando la práctica del Trabajo Social y las competencias tecnológicas: Un ejemplo comparativo entre EE.UU. y España»), la evaluación participativa en Turquía, Portugal, España, Colombia y Brasil (capítulo 36, «Evaluación participativa en organizaciones sociales que atienden situaciones de emergencia: una perspectiva de trabajo social digital»), el caso italiano (capítulo 37, «Trabajo social digital en tiempos normales y en tiempos extraordinarios: la experiencia italiana») o Colombia (capítulo 38, «Programa de Trabajo Social y Protección Social Digital: Transferencia condicionada de efectivo en Colombia»).

Antonio López Peláez y Gloria Kirwan (eds.).
The Routledge International Handbook of Digital Social Work.
New York: Routledge, 2023

https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.121

En el bloque sexto, «Trabajo social digital: futuras transformaciones, direcciones y retos», se agrupan los cuatro últimos capítulos de este libro, presentando algunos de los desafíos que tenemos que afrontar colectivamente en los próximos años. Por ejemplo, gestionar la digitalización para mejorar el bienestar social (capítulo 39, «'Aprovechar la tecnología para el bien social': Un gran reto para el trabajo social»), fortalecer el apoyo a los colectivos vulnerables (capítulo 40, «Trabajo social digital: apoyo al alcance de la mano»), mejorar la representación de los usuarios en el ámbito digital (capítulo 41, «Producción digital de personas en el trabajo social») y el diagnóstico de los desafíos en los próximos años (capítulo 42, «El futuro del trabajo social digital: Desafíos, tendencias y oportunidades»).

En este último capítulo los coeditores del *Handbook* sintetizan muy bien los resultados de este proyecto y nos presenta los desafíos que estamos afrontando ya desde ahora: el desarrollo de metodologías de intervención en el ámbito digital basadas en el codiseño y la participación, la reorganización de los servicios sociales para aprovechar el potencial de la digitalización y la inteligencia artificial, el análisis comparativo de buenas prácticas, el establecimiento de reglas y un modelo o estándar de intervención digital basada en los principios éticos del trabajo social y los derechos humanos, y mejores estrategias de coordinación entre Administraciones, usuarios y profesionales.

En conjunto, este libro nos permite afrontar en mejores condiciones nuestro presente, y, dada la velocidad de los cambios tecnológicos, me permito animar a los coeditores para que trabajen en una segunda edición, que amplíe aún más los temas a tratar desde la perspectiva del trabajo social digital.

Referencias

Castillo de Mesa, J., Marcuello-Servós, C., López Peláez, A. y Méndez Domínguez, P. (2021). Trabajo Social y activismo digital: sororidad, interseccionalidad, homofilia y polarización en el movimiento #MeToo. *Alternativas. Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, *28*(2), 351-375. doi: https://doi.org/10.14198/ALTERN2021.28.2.09.

López Peláez, A., Erro-Garcés, A., Pinilla García, F. J. y Kiriakou, D. (2022). Working in the 21st Century. The Coronavirus Crisis: A Driver of Digitalisation, Teleworking, and Innovation, with Unintended Social Consequences. *Information*, 12, 377. https://doi.org/10.3390/info12090377.

López Peláez, A., Erro-Garcés, A. y Gómez-Ciriano, E. J. (2020). Young people, social workers and social work education: the role of digital skills. *Social Work Education. The International Journal, 39*(6), 825-843. DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2020.1795110

López-Peláez, A., Kalenda Vávrová, S., Gojová, A., Erro-Garcés, A. y Acebes Valentín, R. (2024). Digital social work. *International Social Work*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728241267804

López Peláez, A., Marcuello Servós, Ch., Castillo de Mesa, J. y Almaguer-Calixto, P. (2020). The more you know, the less you fear. Reflexive social work practices in times of COVID-19. *International Social Work*, *63*(6), 746-752. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872820959365

Notas

1   Se trata de una editorial del máximo prestigio académico. Por ejemplo, en la clasificación SPI, en el área de Sociología, la editorial Routledge figura en el *primer lugar* en el ranking de editoriales extranjeras.